

THE BIG ROCK

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CHAPTER 1

MEETING - THE INDIANS

Ed walked into the bar and looked around. The Rusty Bucket sure is the right name for this place. Nothing has changed in here for the last 15 years including the customers. But it has potential, he thought. Gene came walking over with a smile and said, "How' your mom? I met her a couple times. She's a nice lady."

"She's doing ok. Not only did she lose her husband, but she found out a lot of bad stuff that she says she never knew."

Ed had met Gene a couple times and knew him as being a nice guy. He was in his fifties but looked like he was in pretty good shape. Not "work out" shape, just work hard shape. Gene then asked, "Is she going to be ok money-wise?"

Yeah, she's got the house free and clear, she gets a retirement check and she always had some money squirreled away."

This was probably going to be a strange meeting. Dad's deal making put everyone in a spot they hadn't counted on. Dad had "low balled" the price on the bar by not telling anybody he had a multiscreen movie coming in on the surrounding property. He did the same thing to Mrs. Martinez on that big piece of land. When he couldn't get his building permit the whole thing went pear shaped, dad went broke and killed himself. Now I own the bar, Gene got a 75 thousand dollar down payment and holds a mortgage for another 75. When it all happened, Gene was the one who approached Ed on maybe hooking up to make the restaurant a go.

It was 2:30 in the afternoon. Ed could tell that Gene was cleaning up the bar from the lunch crowd. He asked, "You want a drink?"

"Yeah, I'll have a beer."

As Gene was pouring the beer he said, "Well its good your father arranged to have her own the house."

Ed kind of shrugged his shoulders and tilted his head as he said almost apologetically, "I'd like to think it was because he was a nice guy but actually it was all part of his plan. Years ago, when he sold the family restaurant to my brother and started his grand life as a real estate guy he didn't want to have to go to mom for a signature when

he bought sold or borrowed. So they made a deal and he deeded the house to her and kept the rest to do his wheelin' and dealin'."

"Your family has been here forever."

Ed was quick to respond "Well 1895 actually. They were "boomers" not "sooners""

"I've heard of sooners, I'm a boomer."

Ed didn't think he would be getting into a history lesson but thought this is a good way to break the ice for the business discussion that lies ahead. "We're not talking baby boomers. In the 70's there were very few white settlers. Most people have heard of the Homestead Act where you could get free land. What most people don't know is that it was passed under Lincoln. The Civil war and then cleaning up the mess afterwards postponed the actual "Land Rush" to 1889. My great, great grand dad was in the land rush."

"Yeah but the sooner boomer thing?" Gene asked.

"Well one of the things I learned from my dad is that somebody always gets a bigger slice of the pie. In this case the early settlers, Sooners, got first dibs. You've got to remember there were 3 million acres given away. The guys that were already here picked up the best pieces usually around water. The rest, like my ancestor had to ride to stake out his 160 acres. You've seen the movies. Well, my Grampa Foster was one of those guys on a horse named Poli."

Gene had always been a bit of a history buff. This was real history about his own neighborhood. "This is so cool. Do you want something to eat?"

"Yeah, I'll have a Number 1. Well done on the burger."

The waitress was cute. She kept checking me out. She was a little young and Bill's niece. I need to leave that alone. As Ed was looking around he thought, God, look at this place I own. An old man's bar with an overgrown diner. It's junk now, but the location is good and the building looks sound. I bet it could work out ok. There is so much to do. It's going to be expensive to change this into something. Dad was right about one thing, having a multi-screen movie house next door would have been a huge plus. Oh well.

Gene interrupted Ed's thoughts with, "So the Sooners were the early guys who ended up with the best land and the boomers were the new guys. What's with the horse Poli? That used to be the name of your family's bar. What's with that?"

Ed responded in between sips of his beer. "Well to tell that story you first have to know about the Rock. To tell the story about the Rock you need to go back even before the Sooners to the Indians."

"Well everybody knows about the Rock. That's how the town got its name and I know about the Indians. We screwed them out of their land all the way up to Canada and forced them on to reservations we set up in the worst part of the State."

Ed was enjoying telling the story. "A couple of things, yeah that's true. But before that we had our own Indians, the Arapho and the Chickaua. The Cavalry ran them off in the 80's. War isn't just a white man's game. The various tribes didn't always get along. Such was the case here."

Gene was having fun. "Why were they fighting and how do you know all this crap?"

Ed thought, I never really talked to this Gene guy before. He seems smart. He appears to be genuinely interested in the history of our town. Ed began, "Let's start with how I know this crap as you call it. I did my senior thesis on the history of my family's land. Most of my research came from a stack of diaries that have been passed down in my family for over a century. I know the name and birthday of everybody in my family tree. I know when they died and from what. I also know all the major events that happened around here. The women of my family did this and the matriarch of it all actually pushed it back even further. She knew that this "Rock" that was initially their nemesis, had to have some historical significance so she talked with some of the remaining Native Americans and finally got the story."

"This is so much fun. Keep talkin' I'll grab a pitcher of beer. Why don't you publish this thesis of yours?"

"I don't know how interesting it would be if you weren't from around here. You know Bill Swain from the Tribune?"

Gene said, "Yeah he comes in for lunch once in a while."

"He read my thesis and wants me to break it down into sections for a historical series he would print in the paper. I'd have to rewrite a bunch so each section would stand alone yet kind of introduce the next piece. I haven't gotten around to doing that. Life and leisure kind of got in the way."

"You need to do that Ed," Gene said emphatically. "If we are going to make this restaurant a go we are going to need all the PR we can get. Right now, the only PR we've got is your father's scandal. Besides I think it's interesting. "

Ed immediately noticed that Gene was talking about the restaurant as if they were partnered up. He was the one who brought it up when Dad died. He's got the money that Dad paid him. He looks like he'd be a hard-working partner and everybody I've talked to likes him and thinks he's honest. If I can't make this deal I'd have to go to family and that would suck.

"Hey, I can give you a copy and you can read it at your leisure."

"Do that but now I'd like to hear it from the horse's mouth. I know this Poli gets in there somewhere."

As Ed refilled his glass he said, "Yeah she does but first let's get back to the Indians. Remember the land around here is mostly flat except my family's land that has a gentle slope rising behind the plaza, then getting quite steep with this huge rock sitting on top. Geologists say it came from a freak earthquake millions of years ago. The Indians thought it came from the other direction. They thought the Gods placed the rock here to be an elevated place of worship. The most honored dead were buried here, the Arapho on the North side and the Chickaua to the Southeast."

Gene was interested enough that he would break into the conversation, "Oh, I get it the two tribes started arguing about who had the rights for the gateway to the "Happy Hunting Ground".

"That would probably be nice and most likely was how the leaders stirred their people into war but actually the underlying cause was food and water. First the food part. Remember back then they didn't have rifles that would drop a deer or buffalo when you hit it. Instead, you have a hunting party with bows, arrows, spears and knives. So, when you get lucky enough to hit something it keeps running. maybe for miles. Horses were domesticated at that time but not everyone had one. You might run for a couple three hours chasing down what you hit. Nothing pisses you off more after that than finally catching up to find that someone else has stolen your catch. The Indians

weren't big on laws, but it was understood by both tribes that you don't take someone else's hit. But if the initial arrows fell out during the chase, you didn't really know who shot it and most importantly your family was hungry, so you lash up the find and start running it home. When you are dragging 300-pound deer two things happen; you move slower and you leave a trail. Soon the other hunting party catches up with you and the argument begins. Sometimes it gets settled. Sometimes the prey is split and sometimes there is human bloodshed. Whenever anyone dies revenge becomes a problem.

Maps at the time of the Land Rush weren't very good and the Indians didn't have any. We ended up with our family parcel of land because the maps said it didn't have any water. What is now called Rustler's Creek ran through the back Northwest corner of the property. That creek ran through what was then Arapaho territory. Water is always important. The fish in the stream are an important food source especially when game is scarce. Control of the water becomes a huge issue."

"I know I keep interrupting but questions come to my head and I want to ask them before I forget. I know where Rustler's creek is so that was the back end of your 160 acres. How wide was it?"

"OK, we're about two miles West of my family property. The original piece had about 2,600 feet of frontage on this road that didn't exist then down to Peach street. Basically, it is the land the plaza and my brother's restaurant occupies."

"Then it goes straight back to Rustler's creek?"

"Yeah, actually about 150 feet on the other side of the creek. That makes up 160 acres."

"I've never really understood acreage."

Ed instructed, "Well an acre is about a big football field. So, our piece was about twelve fields wide and twelve deep. Let's get back to the Indians. Metzo was the chief of the Arapaho. He was a powerful man. His father and grandfather were buried at the Rock along with two big medicine man of their time. He had 2 sons, Magandon and Shontil.

"I know 2 jokes about Indians naming their kids."

"Don't go there. I don't know what their names mean but I know it was important to them and should not be subjected to our humor. Anyway, times were getting tough with a drought and game was scarce. Magandon, who I guess was about 21 was on a hunting party, shot a deer like I described before but when he caught up with the fallen animal a Cherikau hunting party was carving up the animal to carry to their homes. Meanwhile one of the Arapaho had fallen back because he had to take a dump."

"Get out. This is history being impacted by a guy having to take a shit."

"Hey it happens. Shirock by name had fallen back. Nobody knew a confrontation was coming, he just had to relieve himself. When the 2 hunting parties found each other tempers were flaring. They probably could have worked it out, but the Cherikau party was led by a hot head trying to make points with his tribe. His name was Latlol. The Arapaho party was led by Magandon who was more than happy to tell all that he was the son of the chief and honor should be displayed. The opposing young spitfire looked upon this opportunity to move the elders into a war position that would rid the area of these troublesome neighbors. He knew they had more warriors and horses. They needed just to attack these foes, kill them and drive the rest into the sunset. He approached the chief's son in a position of homage, saying that we can work out our difficulties. As he got close he drew his blade

and stabbed Magandon in the chest killing him immediately. Everyone was shocked and the battle began.

Tomby was the youngest of the Arapaho party. He had never even killed an animal in the hunt. He was brought along to dress out the deer once it had been fallen. Without even thinking he killed one of the foes with a lance. Two men jumped on his back and ended his life. Mikto, another member of the hunting party killed one also but soon succumbed to the force of greater numbers. Then the horror began. Being scalped is a disgrace. Not being buried with your family is a disgrace as well. Latlol scalped each member of the fallen and buried them together in an unmarked grave. They returned home with the deer, their two dead allies and many stories to tell about how they shamed the son of their opposing chief. Shirock had caught up to the bloodletting just as it had concluded. All of his friends were dead, and the enemy was beginning the scalping and burial. He knew he could not compete with the three-remaining enemy, so he laid there watching and cried.

When Latlo reported back, some of the Elders were not happy. They thought that peace could be made saving everyone from loss of life. Other Elders recognized that the outcome of hunting and fishing were dwindling and to support an ever-growing tribe War might be inevitable. It would be better to take place now when we clearly had the advantage in number of warriors and horses. Council meetings ran late into the night.

Shirock made mental note of the shallow burial site and began the full day walk back home. He could see the fires preparing the evening meal. He knew he had bad news for all and potentially a story that would begin an all-out war. He was frightened. He was greeted by the families of the hunting party all waiting for news. His news was tragic. There was much weeping from the women. He was escorted to the Chief Abadertidy and told the story of the fight, killing, scalping and burial of his son. Whelgeng, younger brother of Magandon listened, fell down and moaned. A council meeting was called immediately. Everyone felt rage. Some Elders with cooler heads asked that we first send Shirock with a party to retrieve the bodies so that a proper burial could be made. It was felt by some that what they wanted was to offer time for this function so that a decision could be made after all concerned could calm down and choose a path that is led by something more than anger and revenge.

At the council meeting one elder stated, "We have scouted their position and know that they have 80 warriors and 25 horses. We can muster only 55 warriors and 17 horses. Even if we fight valiantly, we will probably lose in the field. After such a loss our women and children will be subject to whatever they want to do. We should not assume mercy."

Ed continued as Gene hung on every word like a kid at the movies. "Because of this, two of the Elders constantly pushed for appeasement. "If we leave this valley we will be alive", was presented against we must kill these murderers for what they did. The story of the scalping of the Chief's son and the shallow grave kept the anger at a fever's pitch. Reality versus anger.

Whelgeng, a young brave, son of chief and brother of the murdered asked to speak to council. If not for his family he would have been denied.

He approached the speaking position at the campfire. He had been allowed to sit in the back of the tent for many of these meetings so he knew what to do. He addressed each of the three Elders with respect even giving a one- or two-line story about how they earned such respect. Like, "Sanduran you are the leader that had the wisdom to push on farther than we have ever been before in search of the buffalo. And over that hill we found the buffalo, hunted and had our fill for the whole tribe. I call upon your courage and wisdom."

Finally, he addressed the issue. "We all feel anger. We want revenge on the dogs that dishonored our tribe and my brother. We also know that they outnumber us and they have more horses. On a regular battlefield we will

fall in defeat. I suggest that we change the battlefield. Father, I suggest that you send a message of rage to their chief. Tell them that we must avenge our loss."

Sanduran speaks, "Have you not been listening? I know you are angered by what was done, but we cannot sacrifice the whole tribe".

"Let me finish. Father, you have fought battles before." Whelgeng picks up a lance and begins drawing on the dirt floor. "This is the Rock. Here is the sloped land down to the flats. If you were to fight on the flats where would you gather your warriors. The father circles an area just East of the flats. On the night before would you make any preparations?"

One could see the experience in the chief's eyes as he stated "We would want a morning battle so the sun would be in their eyes. The night before we would move extra armament, weapons, and provisions."

"Do you think a Cherecau scouting party would notice such preparations?"

"Certainly." The chief responded.

"If you, as a Cheracaua leader knew that, where would you stage you warriors?"

The three Elders looked at each other, the drawing on the ground and then said. "Behind the rock."

"Why"?

The chief explained, "You could approach at dawn unnoticed by your enemy. Create your attack formations and begin your assault downhill. It would be a perfect plan."

Some in the crowd were growing tired of this story being told by a youngster. Others were paying close attention trying to figure out what the chief's son was planning. "What if we had our 10 best bowmen with thirty arrows each hiding on the top of that rock?"

Silence took over the tent. Finally, the three Elders and the rest of the warriors in the tent all looked up in shock.

"It could work"

Questions and statements started coming from everyone.

"How and when do we get them there so they are not noticed?"

"How do they know when to attack?"

"How do we know the Cherekaua will go there."

Whelgeng quieted the crowd saying all good questions. "Isn't it worth giving it a try instead of trying to fight a force that clearly outnumbers us? We know we must fight them for honor and for food. With this plan we can win."

Many people started talking at the same time, which was very uncommon. The chief regained order and allowed each to share their ideas. Most were supportive, some were not. Many had suggestions to make it better. A sounding horn from a place of visibility off to the west could signal the attack. The chief to chief message would be an angry call to battle in open field, to avoid the cowardly attack on villages killing women and children. The most

creative idea was also the toughest to implement. They would gather fabric and blankets and color them like the surface of the rock. The warriors would go up the rock the day before as the chief's message is being delivered. They would have water, dried meat, arrows and ropes to get down. They would need to stay there for the night and a morning in total silence.

Gene interrupted again, "-Wait a minute, wait a minute. Two things, how could you possibly know this stuff and how could those guys lay up there all night?"

"Again, the second question first, they had to. These guys as you call them are warriors. They are not only fighting for their life, but their family's life and in fact the lives of everyone they know. Throughout time ambushes even up to current wars require sacrifice. They were prepared to lay on a hot flat rock for 20 hours in total silence. They just hoped the rest of it worked. As far as how I know all this stuff, I'll tell you when the story is over." Ed continued.

"The plans were finalized. The chief's message played to the arrogance of his foe. The Cherecaua knew they were going to win especially in an open field battle with only warriors. They were having meetings about what to do after they won. Whelgeng asked for volunteers to join him in this mission. There were many. The ten best with a bow were selected. One of the women had a great idea that was shared and accepted. They would take two buffalo hides that were almost the height of a man and a little wider and lash them together. They were then mounted on a frame of branches. The purpose was two- fold. First it would afford some comfort for lying on a hot, hard, coarse rock. Second, a simple rig was built that set it upright acting as a shield. The double hide protected against arrows that will be shot their way from below. Back to the council meeting"

"The symbol for the tribe has always been the hawk. A brown hawk wing on a blue patch of sky was painted on all ceremonial dress. There were two large banners hung in the chief's tent that showed a hawk about to clutch its prey. When a council meeting was called both banners were brought down and prominently displayed. War paint was also brown and blue. It had been 15 years since the paint was worn. Preparations were now being made.

7 miles away the Cherecaua were meeting. Latlo was being honored by some but looked down upon by others. He responded loudly. "We all know this had to happen. There is nothing left to do but finish them. I killed that Magandon and didn't even get a scratch. He was a coward. They're all cowards. I can't wait to kill his brother and place his scalp on my belt next to Magandon. Let's hunt them down like the dogs they are and kill them. They do not deserve to live and they certainly don't deserve to live here. We will kill their men; keep the young women we want and send the rest to the west and let the prairie have them. We will take their horses and provisions and claim all of this land as our own."

An Elder raised his hand to silence the young brave and then said "For many years we have enjoyed peace. You do not know the sound of women weeping in tents. You do not know the feeling of burying a friend or son. "

Latlo quickly responded, "Maybe not but I know the feeling of hunger when game is scarce. There is not enough food and water for both tribes to survive. We outnumber them in man and horse. Now that Magandon is dead we have to do something before they do."

A brave enters the tent. An Arapaho woman has been taken by the guards at the edge of camp. She carries a branch of peace and says she has a message for our chief.

"Could this possibly be a trick? Is there any danger?"

"She is older and has no weapons." The brave responded.

"Bring her in."

As she entered the tent she could sense that the mood was serious. "I come with a message from Chief Abadertidy. He has retrieved his son's body and is currently setting him to rest in keeping with our traditions. One of our braves saw the murder, scalping and shallow burial at the hands of Latlo. If you surrender this murderer at dawn tomorrow the peace can be kept. If you do not, then the Arapaho will avenge his death. If you have more honor than Latlo but are unwilling to give him up, then we shall meet in open battle. Welgeng will lead our forces and hopes to see Latlo at the onset. Send either Latlo or a messenger at dawn to the Rock." She was afraid of what could happen next.

Latlo yelled, "Kill this wretched woman and send her pieces back in a bag."

The Chief responded angrily "Silence. What do you think we are? Tell your chief that he will have an answer in the morning."

The Messenger leaves happy to be alive.

A troubled look had taken over the Chief's face. He looked straight into the eyes of Latlo and said, "Latlo, you are the son of my brother. After his death you grew up with little guidance. I should have done better. But who do you think you are some great warrior? You have not been to battle. The only scalp you have was taken from a man that hadn't drawn his weapon. Half of my brain wants me to tie you up and send you to the Arapaho. Unfortunately, my heart won't allow it. Send a messenger to the Rock at dawn. Make it a lone brave, not an old woman. Carry the branch of peace but state that an open field battle is coming. I also want a scouting party to see what they are up to. Find out where they prepare for battle."

Again, Gene interrupts, "This is exciting stuff but I still need you to answer my first question, "how do you possibly know all this stuff.

"I told you Great Gramma Sarah. Ok I might have added a detail or two, but the basics are true. This is tribal lore reported to Sarah over 100 years ago. Plus it was verifiable by what we call cave writings which in this case are rock writings. On the North side of the rock over their burial site was the painting of their tribal symbol the fox on green land. On the South side was the Hawk flying on a blue background of sky. Additionally, on the Southside were three painting, not much more than stick figures, that showed the murder of the chief's son, complete with deer and hunting parties, braves climbing the rock and hiding and the final battle. Gramma Sarah copied them all for her diary. About 60 years ago the Historical society found out about this and investigated. Most of the drawings were worn away but enough remained to validate the pictures in the diary.

"Ok, get back to the story, I gotta hear this." Gene noticed that Ed's appearance changed as he went into story telling mode. This was so cool.

"Only Blanton could climb the rock, especially at night. There is no reason for the enemy to be around, but we must still remain quiet. Blanton climbed carrying only a rope. Once on top he threw one end of the rope down and Chayen, one of the smaller braves, who followed him up. With two on top it was easier to secure the rope for the others and all the supplies to follow. Under the light of a quarter moon they first selected their battle positions. It made sense for the enemy to gather on the East side of the rock. That is where we would spring our surprise attack. Each man had 30 arrows with a total of forty more kept in reserve. We hoped to get off 10 arrows each before the enemy withdrew. As they fled we would move to the South side of the rock and continue striking. Eventually they would move out of range. We had three ropes to get down and join in with our brothers in slaying

the enemy. We hoped to kill many braves in the first attack. Many of their horses would die or fall once pierced by arrows. Welgeng had trained all the braves well a day in advance so when they got on the rock they knew their jobs with final instructions made noiselessly with a few gestures. The last preparation was setting up the shields and securing them in place with the bracing branch. This was practiced a few times to make sure that it could be done quickly and offered the most cover. Part of the practice was to fire arrows into the shields to see if they would stand once hit and stop the arrows. It was good that the enemy arrows would lose much of their force as they flew to the top of the rock. Our arrows flying down actually grew in speed.

With all that done it was time to create the hiding area. One part of the rock, luckily on the Eastern side jutted up about the height of a dog. That became one edge. As was practiced the day before the buffalo hides were laid down each making a sleeping area for a brave. They were placed almost touching to take up the least amount of space. The cover came in 4 pieces. The women had done a great job in coloring the cloth to almost the same as the rock. They even tied in small stones and rocks to better blend in. We sat there saying nothing, quietly praying for a few hours putting off if possible a painful, silent night and morning. We could wait no more. Welgeng had been studying the top of the rock to figure out the best placement of the shields. He laid out 4 and then 4 followed by 2 turned the other way. All the braves relieved themselves. The first 4 braves took their places followed by the second 4. Each group of 2 shared a small container of water and a few pieces of dried meat. With the 8 in place Welgeng and Chayen unrolled 2 of the tarps and spread them. They walked around the area tucking in edges. They then took the third tarp and covered the bows arrows and supplies. Finally, they laid on their shields, pulled the cover over and secured from underneath. Now they wait.

The hope was to get some sleep. Hearts were pounding. Tomorrow we may die. Tomorrow our families may die. Will I be brave? Will my arrows be true? Will my wife and children be murdered? Will the enemy fall for our trap? The cloth itches. I can't get comfortable. Clear your mind. Sleep. Please sleep. Time slowly passes.

I don't believe it. It is good to sleep but you can't snore. The night is so quiet, that the snoring sounds like screaming. Thud, huh, what, ok. Silence. I can now see the moon through the fabric. Sleep, please sleep.

The scouting party reported back. "They are setting up about three arrows flight below the rock."

"How much preparation?" the chief asked.

"No braves just women and a couple guards. They are bringing over water, and healing kits.

"We could send out a patrol just before dawn and kill them." One brave suggested.

"No, it is better that we know where they will be. Let them store their water. They will need their healing supplies. If we move too early they will change their spot. I like this location. They will need much of the morning to move their war party into position. About the same as us. Wake everyone well before dawn. We will move quietly and take up a position behind the rock. Once gathered and organized we will come around the rock and charge down the hill and kill the Arapaho."

Back at the campfire of the Arapaho, the chief spoke to the warriors who were all gathered in silence. The light of the campfire danced on the chief making his words seem even more important. "Tomorrow we might all die or prevail. The spirit of our ancestors smile on us tonight because they know we have a gallant plan and skilled warriors to carry it out. You know what you must take with you tomorrow so make it ready now. Put on the paint. No drum circle tonight. Remain quiet to honor my son and the other braves who lie in silent discomfort"

The braves nodded their approval. Only a third of the warriors had ever seen war. For the last 2 days these older men have shared with the younger stories from their youth. Sometimes it was tactical like flanking your foe, or bringing down a horse with a spear. Most often it was encouragement trying to steady the nerves. Everyone new how important this battle was to be.

CHAPTER 2 THE AMBUSH - VISION FOR CHANGE

The Chief looked to the East. Morning was almost here. It was a cold night, but darkness faded to soft light in the Eastern sky. There were still many clouds, but the horizon was clear. As the top of the sun became visible its rays reflected off the bottom of the clouds floating far off. The colors were a little different. Beautiful. Oh, the first birds. It always starts with one or two but soon they all awaken with something to say after a night's sleep. They're hungry. As the sun climbs it starts to get warmer. More clouds burn away. I see a hawk circling in the sky. It sees something. First it flutters its wings to almost stop midair, then it drops, talons out, latches on to its prey and soars off. That is a good sign, it's going to be a beautiful day. I hope you slept well my son. I know you didn't. It must have been unbearable hiding under that rocky blanket. Soon you will arise and prepare yourself to avenge your brother.

Welgeng was awake before dawn. He laid there in pain from a motionless hard night. Through the cloth he began to see the sky lighten. Time was near. Now is when we needed the most caution. He heard the birds, further signaling the beginning of this eventful day. He rolled back the cloth and crawled on his belly to get a better view of the East. He saw his father leading the first row of warriors into their position. He crawled back and began removing the covering. With a motion everyone knew to stay still. One man began to whisper but with a glare from Welgeng that stopped immediately and was not tried by anyone else. Draping himself with the fabric he crawled to the west to see if the enemy was approaching. Amazing, so far the plan was working. A long line of braves, longer than our own, were approaching the rock. He came back to his men and smiled. They knew what that meant.

The men arose to a sitting position and began checking their shields. Some needed to be adjusted after a night of being slept on. 4 shields were set up facing 4 others a little more than a man's length apart. The cloth was adjusted creating a camouflaged cave big enough for the war party to adjust their bows and inspect their arrows. The other cloth covered Geldeng in his look out position.

The idea was to get as many of the enemy as close to the rock as possible. He waited until what appeared to be the last of them broke from the clearing and were a medium walk to the rock. He climbed down from his position pulled off the tarp and the men quietly and quickly moved to their selected spot near the edge. You could hear the horses and even the low talking from the braves below. From his position in the middle, he saw that each man was ready with a notched arrow. Without even a command the battle began. It wasn't until they notched the second arrow that all of them began a scream that had been building inside them for what felt like forever.

The enemy was totally surprised. They tried to quickly ready themselves but were distracted by the site of other braves and horses falling dead. As they began to fire upward, they were angered that they were caught off guard and even angrier that their arrows were ineffective against a better positioned adversary. The arrows continued to fall with many hitting their mark.

I can't believe how good this is working, Welgeng thought. We each got off three or four arrows before an enemy arrow even came close. Everyone down below was so tightly grouped that almost all our arrows hit something. Braves and horses were falling everywhere and for some reason they stood their ground rather than moving away. Our shields worked great deflecting the enemy arrows that hit them on an angle. One such arrow bounced off a shield and hit a man in the face with a glancing blow. He was injured but could still fight. One arrow struck Chayen in the chest. He was seriously injured and could fight no more. We hoped we could heal him later. We continue to fire.

As soon as the chief heard the battle begin, he gave the signal for his warriors to begin walking the hill towards the rock. He was watching two things. He could see the closest 2 warriors on top of the rock. He couldn't tell who they were, but he could count how many arrows they fired. He was hoping for 5 each. If fifty arrows were fired and half met their mark then the sides would be even for their battle. The other thing he watched for was the charge of the enemy from behind the rock. If they charge, he would set up in a defensive position if they don't then he would continue his march up the gentle hill. He signaled for the drums as he kept counting, 6, 7, 8, 9. I don't believe this, they might shoot 100 arrows down on the Cherecaua. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15,... Why would they stay there this long?

"Pick up the pace." He ordered. The war party moved to a slow run. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. By now they were within an arrow's length. "Drop the drums and charge"

Welgeng heard the hollers and screams of his father's party. He could tell they were close. He kept on firing into the carnage below. Half of their horses were down with many more having one or more arrows in them. More than half of their warriors laid there dead or wounded. 2 more of our men were down and out of the fight. I didn't have time to check on their injuries because I needed to keep on firing. Four of us had used our thirty arrows and went back for resupply. *As I kept firing, I noticed enemy warriors dropping that we didn't hit. The lead bowmen of my father's force were now within range and adding to the kill. As the full force arrived, they ran through the remaining twenty with little resistance. I stopped firing.*

I sat down put my head in my hands and did nothing. My arms and my fingers were sore and aching. I had never seen so much death. I had never killed a man before. I know I killed more than ten. Before I could think much about what that means I knew I had to take care of my men. I checked on Cheyan and found him dead. Tantra was wounded in the shoulder but not seriously. Mitco was shot in the armpit and the arrow was still deep inside him. We cut off the end of the arrow so he could be lowered off the rock easier but someone down below with more skills would need to remove the arrowhead. We threw our ropes down the rock so fresh braves could climb up and help us with the wounded. I was surprised that the first man up the rope was my father the chief. He looked at me and even his eyes smiled.

He ran over and embraced me and said, "I'm so glad you are alive. You and your plan saved all of us."

The celebratory screams had already begun as I started down the rock. As I got close to the bottom a few braves noticed me and soon the crowd went silent. It was strange. I stood there looking as everyone drew near. Everyone began screaming and came up to touch my shoulder. I was not expecting to be honored so.

Meanwhile there was work to do and decisions to be made. We needed to tend our wounded. We needed food and water for our braves and horses. We needed to decide about the spoils of war especially the enemy braves that were still alive.

We had six dead, eleven wounded and one seriously injured horse. The enemy had 59 dead, 17 wounded and 11

prisoners that were only slightly wounded. There were some among us that wanted to kill everyone including the women and children back at their village. Fortunately, our elders had more wisdom.

We collected all the weapons and horses less one. We sent one prisoner on horseback to his village to bring the women to tend their sick and bury their dead. It took them 4 days to prepare all the burials. In that time it was decided that they would be allowed to pack up their things including seeds and leave headed North never to be seen or heard from again. They would be given 3 horses and 5 knives that they could use to make bows and lances for hunting once they were a 3 day walk from here.

Six of the women, all widows with children asked to become part of our tribe. They were accepted.

Gene popped in again, this time excited, "You have got to be kidding me? That's as good a story as I've seen on TV in a while. So what happens to the Chief's son? Does he go on to be chief? Come on keep going."

Ed quickly came back with "Wait a minute> Let's remember why we're here. We need to figure out if we want to do this business together".

"I know. I gotta believe we can work that out. You know my menu. Let's look at the kitchen."

Ed was looking around and said, "Wow, you've got a much nicer kitchen than I thought. You've got great cooler space, probably need more freezer space, your stoves are good and you have a stack oven. You can change your menu in lots of ways if you want to."

"You sound like you know what you're doing. How do you know about kitchens?"

"I worked in my brother's kitchen for 6 summers while going to school. I was almost a manager of sorts. I cooked, ordered supplies, ran the inventory control all kinds of stuff."

Gene smiled, "Woo, that is a bonus. What's your overall thought?"

"You need a good cleaning. I think you should modernize what you offer".

"Kitchens always need a good cleaning. What do you mean modernize? I don't want to do steaks and lobsters like your brother."

Ed shaking his head looked back and said, "No there is only room in town for one upscale restaurant. That doesn't mean we can't find a niche".

"Like what?" Gene asked.

"Well, you've got 200 expensive homes literally across the street. You've got another 700 normal homes just South of that. Then you've got small homes and low rent apartments for another 1200 folks. You know what you don't have?"

"What?"

Ed responded, "A good pizza".

"You want to make a pizza joint?"

"No, I want to make a place that has a friendly bar, a place for families to eat and a great pizza that is available for

pick up or delivery."

"We've always been" Ed spoke up before Gene could finish.

"It doesn't matter what you have been. This is the new world. Before we go further, we should review where we think we are. How do you understand it?"

"Well, your dad bought this place for \$150,000 that he paid \$75k in cash with a note for another \$75 payable at \$1,200 a month. He then asked me to rent it back for \$1,800 a month for 6 months while you learned the business from me."

Ed tilted his head a little and said, "Well, that's close. You've got the numbers right, but the actual buyer is me. It was part of Dad's grand scheme to distance himself while he was putting together the big deal for the movies. He made me the owner."

"Really."

Ed explained. "Yeah, so on paper, I own this place, you owe me \$1,800 per month in rent for 6 months at the end of which I take over operations and I owe you \$1,200 a month for a long time. And you are sitting on some cash."

"Well, that's right I guess, but weird."

Ed then looked at Gene and said, "All of that is old school. The question is can we work together to make a business profitable. I think we can. It will need some money for improvements. I don't have much, but you do, fresh from the deal. Are you willing to invest a big chunk of that into making something that works? My job will initially be to convince you of every expenditure. I think I can."

"Look, I'm 57 years old and I've been tending bar for more than two decades. I make payroll, take out the garbage and all the other fun stuff that you get while running a small business. I don't have any kids, so I'm destined to live this out. I'm definitely open to change. What's your idea?" Gene looked genuinely interested.

Ed began. "First, let's spend some of your money. Start with \$10,000 that you spend on yourself not the business. Upgrade your truck, go to Disneyworld whatever but enjoy your money. Then take \$15,000 and put it somewhere safe for a rainy day. That leaves you \$50,000 to spend on the business.

Gene said, "I don't need a truck and I certainly don't want to go to Orlando. I can leave it all in."

"I hate to keep quoting my dad but whenever you make a deal you should walk away with something for yourself. It's a good rule."

"OK, where would you spend \$50,000.?"

Ed sat back in his chair and said, "Assuming you don't have any structural problems I would only need about half of that."

"What do you mean structural?"

"How's your air conditioning, heating system, plumbing, roof, electrical. All of these things can be game changers. There is a mystery \$10 k bid out there for a problem that you don't know you have."

Gene said, "I've just had everything inspected and it all seem to be ok. The ac is a little light but good enough."

"Well, there you go, if we start bringing in another hundred people a day with most of them coming at the same time we will need to boost that up. It shouldn't be bad, but I bet it will be \$5 - \$ 7K.

"So, what else do we need?" Gene asked.

"Your kitchen is actually good. We'll need a proofing oven and some other little stuff, but your walk-in cooler and freezer are good. Maybe a couple 4 grand should do it. In the bar you need 2 new big screen TVs for sporting events. Most of your furniture is ok but we'll probably need to spend a couple thousand on some new stuff. You need to upgrade the power behind the stage, and you need an espresso machine."

Gene acted surprised, "Espresso machine?! My guys are drinking beer out of a can. They don't even know what a cappuccino is."

"Yeah, that's the customers you have. I'm talking about the customers we want. While we're at it how many taps do you have?"

"3. Two regulars and a light."

"Do you have room underneath to store any more kegs?" Ed asked.

"Yeah, one more but I haven't needed it."

"If you've got room for one then you have room for 2 small kegs of specialty beer. We need a couple micro brews."

"This is gonna be hard for me to get my mind around. How else are you spending my money?"

"The outside. We need a new image. We need to paint it all. I can do that with the help of a guy. We need a little framework upgrade and some landscaping. It sounds like a lot but with me doing most of the work we can make a big splash for about \$5,000. Then we need a new sign. That's probably another couple grand".

"OK listen, you've been thinking about this, so you have all the numbers in your head. Let me write down what you just said and think about it. Give me the numbers again."

"OK. You keep \$25,000 for fun or rain. You spend

Air conditioning \$7,000

TV \$4,000

Stage electrical \$3000

Kitchen \$2,000

Furniture \$2,000

Taps \$1,000

Outside \$5,000

Sign \$3,000

You've spent less than half of what you got, put \$25k in your pocket and have another \$26 available for the business. You also have a fresh-looking place serving the best pizzas in town. Those pizzas, pasta, burgers, fries and onion rings are available for dine in, pick up or delivery. Let me tell you about the onion rings. Cheapest thing to make and the customers love them. You don't buy them in a box, you cut your own, dip them in a flour/butter/milk sauce and then deep fry. They're great."

"Sounds good but don't talk to me about onion rings."

"Sorry, I like onion rings. In addition to the kitchen, you have an upscale bar offering cocktails, premium beers, and all the coffee drinks. You have three big televisions for all the sporting events and a stage that can handle Friday and Saturday night live entertainment. If it does what I think it is going to do, we will need a computer upgrade with a software package for another \$8,000 that's cash registers and all."

"Really. This all sounds too easy. How do you know all this shit?" Gene asked.

Ed began, "You know it's funny, but I have always been looked at as the worthless child. My big brother has always been the good son. I came along as a surprise when he was 10 years old. That screwed up the overall game my dad had envisioned. It didn't help much that I was an underachiever. I got into college and spent 6 years and almost 100 grand to get a 4-year degree."

"Yeah, I remember talking to your father when we worked out this deal. Now we know he was scheming but even then, he was talking about buying this business being cheaper than sending you to grad school."

"Yeah, but here is what nobody noticed. When I was still in high school, I worked in my brother's place as a bus boy, dish washer and bar back. Summer vacations from college I worked in the kitchen as a cook's helper and then a cook. One summer I was a server. I also ran his inventory control."

"Hell, that's an education." Gene commented.

"Yeah, you'd think so, but I was always in Henry's shadow doing simple menial stuff. He was the star. At school I wanted to be a writer. I knew dad thought that was worthless, so I took some business/accounting classes and again to please dad I took some construction management and design classes. Part of why it took six years was that these classes didn't really contribute to what I needed to get my degree. Now looking back I'm glad I did."

Gene added, "I think I'm glad you did."

"Other stuff I learned from dad's construction business."

"Did you work there too?" Gene asked.

"No, not much but I sat through lots of father son talks."

"Well, that's good."

"No, it wasn't warm and fuzzy sharing. He would pontificate,"

"Pontificate?"

"Yeah, the master would lecture from on high to his lowly son. But I learned stuff. Like with our restaurant the electrical and air conditioning you need a licensed pro, and I know the guy that dad always used. Good work, good

price. All the rest of it is having a plan and doing the work. I know where to get all the supplies. Meanwhile my Uncle Pauly is always available to consult. He's been running the actual construction part of Dad's business for a long time."

"All right. You've given me a bunch to think about. I've got to get ready for happy hour. Do three things for me."

"OK, what do you need?"

Gene gestured with his fingers, "First, stop by later and drop off your book."

"It's not a book. It's my paper."

"Whatever, drop it off. Second, come in tomorrow morning so we can talk some more. I'll cook you breakfast."

"That sounds good, and third?"

"Finish the story about the Indians while I clean up."

Ed began, "Ok, not much important happened unless you happen to be an Arapaho. The hero of the battle of the Rock became chief after his father died. Remember back then living to 50 was a big deal. While he was chief the invasion began."

"The white man?"

"Yeah, first it was a small party of 12, half of which were cavalry. Welfgang and a few braves watched from a hilltop. Then they saw something that would change their life. There was a small herd of buffalo a couple hundred yards away from the white men. Three took off in pursuit and while still a hundred yards away they fired their rifles and 2 buffalo fell to the ground. The braves had never heard this sound before, like thunder. It was even scarier when the echo came around again. They had never seen or heard a gun before. At first, they didn't get it. They thought the white man somehow made this magical noise and the buffalo fell down. It wasn't until the hunting party got close to the buffalo that Welfgang saw how it worked. They would point the gun at the beast. A puff of smoke would appear the animal would lurch when hit and then the sound would arrive. They could point that thing like sighting an arrow and bring down a huge animal from a great distance. Arrows and spears could not compete. The good news is that these men continued walking to the setting sun and were never seen again."

Gene said, "That was the beginning of the end."

"The next year another bigger party came through. The year after that the first wagon train. Previously they had seen the technology of the rifle and were awe struck. Picture seeing your first wheel. Not only a wheel but 4 of them under a cart with a top. They had horses yoked and pulling this thing obviously where the white man ordered. This was flying saucer stuff to a tribe that had mastered attaching 2 long sticks to a horse and dragging them through the dirt with their belongings piled on."

"I never thought about it like that."

"Word came down from a Sioux family that escaped south after having a battle with the white man. The weapons and tools of the two civilizations were not comparable. Worse yet, the numbers kept increasing. The last straw was when a huge crowd of men came and began digging in the dirt in preparation for the iron horse."

"That must have freaked them out."

"Some trading took place, and the Indians were introduced to such things as sugar, whiskey, tobacco along with ground flour and some industrialized goods. No guns allowed. During some battles some Indians were able to get their hands on some rifles. It took a while to figure them out. One setback was when they figured out that you needed bullets. For the most part the whites were mean and somehow entitled. Some white guy way far away made a deal with some other white guy way far away who made some deals with a few white guys a little closer and in the process the vast lands that had been occupied by dozens of tribes for centuries became owned by other white guys. The Indians had to go. This was nothing new. The process began not long after the first Thanksgiving. Deals and promises were made and broken. One side had superior might, technology and numbers. The other didn't even understand the concept of land ownership. The deal was rigged from the beginning. The Arapaho made a deal with the white man to avoid extermination and move to a reservation in Oklahoma."

"God, that's sad."

Ed with a painful look in his eyes said, "Well the US has a few nasty chapters in its history. Slavery, women's rights, Japanese internment camps are all bad but our treatment of the Native American was pitiful. It was done because we could."

"Well on that happy note let me stock my beer cooler. Drop your book by later. I'll try to read some tonight. Then I'll see you for breakfast at 9:30 tomorrow."

"Cool. Catch you then."

Chapter 3 THE DEAL, THE EVALUATION - THE FAMILY PATRIARCH AND MATRIARCH

"Good morning."

"And to you. How did you do last night?" Ed asked.

"About the same as always. I finished up a little early and went home to read."

Ed said, "That probably put you to sleep."

"Not really. I liked it. How long did it take to write that?"

"I had most of the research done primarily from the diaries. I had some library work to do but not much. The actual writing took just over 6 months. "

"I read the section about the Arapaho that you already talked me through and the next chapter. That's exciting by the way, but I prefer hearing it from you. I also got a pad out and started looking at the deal between us." Gene got out his pad.

"Well, we didn't really get into many details with the Indians getting in our way. But what are you thinking?" Said Ed

"Let's start by looking at what happens if we don't make a deal. I keep the \$75 grand and collect rent of \$1,200 a month from you probably until I'm dead."

"Let's hope you outlive the money."

"Yeah, maybe. But I've got no headaches....and nothing to do. What would you do?"

"Well, I've got \$5 grand in savings, a 3-year-old pickup truck that's paid for and I live with my mother."

Gene offered, "Well that living with your mom thing is probably good for both of you for a while."

"Probably right. If you and your money aren't in the deal, then I need to go to plan B. I could probably skip the air conditioning and the electrical for the stage and get the whole job down to under \$20 grand. For the first six months I'd like to have an extra 10 for surprises. So, I'd be \$25 short. I'd hate to, but I bet I could borrow it from my mom or brother. If I go to my brother, I'd have to put up with him wanting to run things. That would be tough."

"So, you'd put in everything you've got, borrow family money with or without hooks and drive on with a little more than a shoestring."

Ed defended, "It's a good shoestring but still a shoestring."

"Look, I like your ideas. I wish I had the gumption to do it myself, but I know that wouldn't happen. So, I propose we partner up. You put in your 5 and I put in 50. So far, I'm 45 ahead. The business owes the note, and we give a one-year forgiveness to help the business change over. That's another chip I'm putting in."

"A big one actually."

Gene added, "We both work our balls off and draw \$300 a week."

"I can certainly live on that."

"We own it 50/50."

Ed jumped in with a "Wait. That's not fair. You've got a bunch more in than I do."

"I know, but I'm going to get it back 10-fold."

"Just how are you going to do that?" Ed questioned.

"You've got a ton of jobs that you need to either manage or in many cases do yourself. Now I'm adding one more."

"What?" Asked Ed.

"When you get home all sweaty from here, I need you to work on your book. Not your paper, your book. And I own half of that too."

Ed rolled his eyes and shrugged his shoulders in disbelief. "You've got to be kidding me. I'm going to have a lot of work to do here. Are you sure you want me wasting my time on writing?"

"It's the only deal I'll make. Look I'm no book critique but I know a good story when I hear one. I like the way you

write but even better I like the way you tell the story. You take all that you've got written and make it more like your story telling and I think you'll have a hit, and we will both make money."

"Do you mind helping?" asked Ed.

"Me? Hell, I can read but I certainly can't write."

Ed continued, "You don't need to write you just need to listen. You see a book is usually written from one perspective. Sometimes it will switch from one person living to another. Tying them together is always the hard part."

"So, what are you thinking?"

"We start the book yesterday."

"Yesterday?" Gene questioned.

"Yeah, I tell you the stories just like I'm doing, along with your questions. We put in our conversations about the restaurant even the structuring of the deal we are talking about. We keep going back and forth all the way up to my dad screwing or trying to screw everybody. There are about 9 or 10 major stories in the book. So far I have told you one. We just keep talking. I'll have a recorder running to capture some of the dialogue. While were talking we can be painting the building, cleaning the kitchen whatever. But that goes in the book too."

"I like it. Remember the restaurant comes first."

"I'm with you on that. I have a lot more faith in making this restaurant work than convincing a bunch of people to buy my book. But I'd love to try."

"Do you know Bill Brown?" Gene asked.

"Sure, the lawyer."

"Yeah, I'll have him draw up what I think we have agreed on and then we will look it over. In the meantime you need to get in here and start learning what you've got so you can better figure out what we need to do."

"I'm starting right now." Ed thought, could it really be this easy?

"Good you load the beer coolers today."

"Ok. After that I'll start working on the kitchen clean up. Assuming nothing goes sideways with the lawyer we can start moving pretty quickly."

"What's our first move? Gene asked.

"Let me call my uncle Pauly and have him bring his air conditioning guy around to look at everything to make sure my numbers are pretty close. The game changes a lot if I'm off by \$40,000 in my estimates."

"Call him up."

Ed goes to the phone.

"Pauly said he can come over this afternoon. I'm not really happy about this next call but I should call my brother."

"That one hurts, huh?"

"Yeah, but I need to do it. We actually get along ok, it's just that he can get sanctimonious."

"God, I love the way you talk. How did he handle your dad's death?"

"You know, no matter what he was still our father. He knows what running a restaurant is all about. I would be a fool not to seek his input."

"Call him up too."

Ed makes that call.

"He said he'd be happy to help. He's coming right over. He actually sounded like a nice big brother."

"Sometimes good things happen in the wake of bad events."

"Look, I'm going to get in the kitchen and get it organized for a good cleaning. Give me a shout if Henry shows up."

Gene nods.

10 minutes pass.

"Hey Ed, your brother is here."

"Hey Henry." Gives a handshake hug. "You know Gene, don't you?"

"Sure." Henry said with a smile.

"Sure, good seeing you again. Condolences on your loss."

"Thanks, yeah times are weird. So, I hear you guys are thinking about going into business together. That should be exciting. I talk to guys who want to open restaurants all the time. I usually try to talk them out of it."

"Why?" Gene asked.

"They typically have some "great" new idea that is going to make them a ton of money. The problem is they don't know the amount of work necessary to make the business a success. The good news with you guys is that you have both been there, done that. Gene, you've been running this place forever and my brother has worked all the crap jobs at my place. Both of you understand work. Are you going to keep it pretty much the same?"

"Actually, there will be some changes. Quite frankly I'm impressed with your brother's ideas."

"Cool, like what? Henry asked.

Gene began, "Let me say it to see if I understand it right. Pizza, pasta for dine in, pick up or delivery. Micro brews added to the bar along with big screen tv for sporting events. Friday and Saturday night small bands and an espresso machine which I'm still not really sold on."

"Do the espresso. The margins are great, and your customers will like it."

"He also wants to upgrade the furniture a little bit and paint and landscape the outside."

"My brother has learned well. We've got the market to support that kind of place. Eddy how's the kitchen?"

"Pretty good actually. The walk in and freezers are good. We'll probably start using the stack ovens because we have them but there is room for a conveyor if we're selling enough. There's a Hobart mixer for the dough. It hasn't been used in forever, but it works good."

"What about the dish washer?"

"Good. It is currently underused but should be able to handle what we are planning."

"Do you have a budget to do all of this?"

"We're hoping to bring it in under \$30,000."

"Really? That sounds light. What about surprises?"

"I've got Uncle Pauly coming over this afternoon to go over the building and my numbers. I'll be doing most of the labor for framing, painting and landscaping. We think we need to goose up the ac a little and upgrade the power to the stage."

"Pauly's guys can do that. It shouldn't be too bad. I bet it will be over \$10 grand."

"That's what I guessed."

"Pauly will give you a good look. Do you have a reserve?" Henry asked.

"Yeah, we've got \$25k in the sock."

"I'm impressed. I think it's a good plan. The market is here for what you are planning. You've got a sound building that you are sprucing up a bit. Your equipment costs are minimal. I just got a flyer on a pizza conveyor. They are cheaper than you think. They really make a better pizza and cut the possibility for screw ups a lot. I'll drop it by. How do you handle your bookkeeping and cost controls?"

Gene said apologetically, "I'm kind of in the dark ages with that. I z out the register, make the deposits, pay my sales taxes, take everything to my cousin who gets me financials about 2 months late. I know what the cost of goods should be on everything I sell but I really don't know what it actually is."

Henry volunteered, "You are right you are in the dark ages. You need to upgrade your bookkeeping and cost controls, but I think I can help."

"How so?"

Henry looks at Ed. "You remember our computer system? You used to input all the inventory info."

"Yeah."

"Well it couldn't handle what I'm doing now. I need individual controls over 16 servers and six bartenders. My bank wants me to have day to day inventory control and other cost management stuff. So I had to buy a new system for over \$35,000. I've got 5 old screens, printers, computer and all the software that I can't use."

"That would work perfect for us. How much do you want?" Ed asked.

"For you little brother it is free."

"Really. Gene that would be perfect for us. I even know how to use it."

"Yeah, you do, but what about me?"

"You're no old dog, you can still learn a couple new tricks."

"It's not that bad. I can teach you. Come on it's easy."

"All right, I'll learn."

"How soon are you doing this and what about marketing?" Gene looked at Henry as he asked his questions and was genuinely impressed with his knowledge.

Ed anticipated he would get some flack on his estimate, but he calmly stated. "It sounds like a lot but when you break it down, I think we can get all done in a month."

Henry and Gene answered in unison "A month?"

"OK, that might be pushing it but why not. Once we shop out the equipment, I bet we can get it in a couple of weeks. Let's see what Pauly has to say about his stuff, but I've seen him move pretty fast. The big work is painting and fixing up the outside. I bet I can get that done in less than 2 weeks. I bet we can get it done in a month, maybe 7 weeks."

The big brother wanted to caution Ed, but he was impressed. "You're biting off a lot but I love your attitude. I wish you had this much fire in your ass when you worked for me."

"This is different."

"I know and I think it's great. What about marketing?"

"I think I can get a human-interest story in the Trib. Especially if we tie it to an ad buy. We want to focus on the opening."

"That's good. I know you are in a hurry to spring out of the blocks here but please remember that your opening and the month that follows is critical. Everybody will try something new. When they get here you have to deliver great food with great service. If you do, they will come back. If you jump too early and deliver poorly it will be hell to get them back. In this month of yours you are going to need to staff up and train. You know Jimmy from my place?"

"Sure, he's a good guy." Ed said.

"He does all my screening, hiring and training among other things. I'll talk to him. It might cost you a couple of pizzas. We've already got job descriptions, and training packages for servers, bartenders and cooks. He also can give your food handlers class that the county health board requires for all your people while showing you how to carry on after he sets it up. You've got to get your food and people right before your opening."

Ed thinks for a second and then says. "Henry (pause) I was hesitant about calling you. This is a big deal for me and I would be stupid if I didn't ask for your guidance. I was hoping that you would come over, look at our overall plan and make sure that Gene and I aren't stepping on each other's dicks." Ed looks straight at Henry and says, "We

have never been really close. What you are doing now is so far beyond my wildest wishes that I don't know what to say."

"Look I've been a big brother that never really acted like one. Even when you worked for me I treated you like a low level employee. I've always been pretty caught up in myself. I don't know, maybe it's dad passing but I realize now that it's just you mom and me. I'm sorry for being a little late but I'm happy to start treating you like the family that you are."

The boys hug.

After this touching moment that almost brought tears to both brother's eyes, Henry got back to business, "Let's get back to marketing. You've brought all the locals in and showed them what you've got. Push the Trib for a follow up article. Then you need a flyer with coupon. People love coupons. Make it \$2 off on a pizza or a family pasta special. You can make up a thousand copies pretty cheap, then hire a kid or two to paper the town. Remember you are trying to get everyone to try you at least once with some of them buying from you every week. That's the magic of pizza. I can't do that with steaks and lobster tails. I'm a special night place. You're dinner."

Gene said, "I'm so happy I could spit. I want a drink. This is a momentous occasion let me buy you guys a drink."

"I'll have a VO on the rocks" Henry said.

"Make it two."

Gene then said, "I've got to tell you why I'm so happy. That a successful restaurateur like you could look over our plan and tell us that we aren't crazy thrills me. That your guidance is filled with so much wisdom is beyond my hopes. That you offer a computer system for free is way over the top. That you would have your highly skilled professionals help with all our personnel issues is a dream come true. But without a doubt to watch two brothers reach out to each other in love makes me want to cry."

Ed said, "Well Henry is doing more reaching than I am, but I am certainly appreciative."

As he raises his glass, Ed says, "we need to think up a new name for this place but in the meantime, to the restaurant."

Gene excuses himself and leaves the brothers alone.

"How's mom?" Asked Henry.

"She's ok. This is a tough time for her".

"I know I'm glad you are living there."

"It keeps her from being lonely and makes my life easier especially knowing what my next six months are going to look like. She still volunteers at the church, plays Wednesday afternoon bridge with the girls and goes out for lunch occasionally with her friends."

"I know. She likes to come to my place but gets pissed when I won't let her pay the check."

"That's mom. Maybe you should let her pay but just throw in a couple of your fancy desserts for the girls."

"That's actually a good idea. She'd probably come in more often if I let her pay. I try to get up to the house at least once a week but it's hard when you are putting in the hours that I do."

"Henry, thanks again for what you are doing. You have really lifted my spirits. You've taken Gene to the Mountain top."

"He's a nice guy. I think he will make a good partner."

"I think so. Hey here comes Uncle Pauly."

"Pauly, thanks for coming."

"My pleasure. Henry, I didn't expect to see you here. How are you two holding up?"

"OK"

"OK"

"So are you guys doing this together?" Pauli asked.

"No, I'm just the big brother checking out Ed's game. Hey, you look this place over good for him and sharpen your pencil."

"I don't even know what I'm doing yet but I knew I would need good numbers. This is a good building. I was on the crew twenty years ago that build it."

"I didn't know that." Said Henry.

Pauly responded, "I did a lot of construction work before I hooked up with your dad. How's your mom?"

"She's hanging in there."

"Mary and I have been talking about having her over for dinner and some cards."

"She'd like that."

"So, what's going on here?"

"Look I'll let you guys talk all that through. I got to get back to the monster place of mine. It sure eats my time. Remember that Ed. You've got to put in a lot of hours in this business."

"Thanks again Henry. I'll stop by have a drink and pick up that literature you have on the pizza oven."

"See you then"

Henry leaves as he shakes Gene's hand who was on the way over to meet Paul.

"Paul, this is my new business partner Gene. In the family he's known as Uncle Pauly."

"Yeah, I'm named after a horse." As he shakes hands he says, "I know Gene. I have had a cold one or two in this place. So what are we doing?"

"Let me show you around and show you what we're planning and then we can come back and show Gene how we can get it all done for \$600."

"I've never questioned your ability to dream Eddy. Let's take a look."

For an hour and a half they walked all around the building checking electrical, plumbing roof and everything else. When Ed had inspected the place, he just gave it a cursory glance and moved on to visualizing the task completed. Paul on the other hand measured everything, took down model numbers of the ac equipment, stuck lines from his multimeter into all the sockets and made a lot of notes. You could tell he was a pro. Then they came back to sit down with Gene.

Pauly gets out his notes and begins. "This is a good building and you've taken care of it well. The roof is good, you've got ample power coming in and your plumbing is good too. Your backstage electrical is almost good. For less than \$500 we can get that to what you need. Your kitchen electrical is ok too. If you get that new conveyor thing you should get a dedicated circuit, but again not big money. If you start filling this place the way you want to then your ac is light. We can use the same ductwork; you just need a bigger supply. 5 or 6 tons should do the job. That's probably going to be about another five grand. Here comes the bad news. Because we are working on the electrical, we are going to need permits. The cost for that is only about a grand. The bad news is that that will trigger ADA".

"Shit".

"What? What's ADA?" Gene asked.

"We've got to handicap the johns."

"And the entrance." Pauli added. "The door should be wide enough, and we've only got 2 steps. That shouldn't be too bad. The entrance should be easy. The johns are another story. Your ladies room has two stalls and enough room to make one accessible. You are going to have to cut into your vanity/sink space by about 2 feet. Unfortunately, that is where one of your sinks are, so we have to arrange things a little to fit it all in. The men's room is a bigger problem. You have two urinals and one stall and no extra room. I'll have my guys draw it up, but I bet you are going to have to expand the men's room into the bar area along the outside wall by about 5 feet."

"That sounds like a lot of money."

"Stay loose Gene. You're getting the family deal here. Everything I've talked about so far including the permit, Electrical, A/C and ADA I can do for \$15,000. A little less if I get lucky. There's less than a week of work here but I will need your go ahead so I can start the permit process. It takes a week to draw everything up and then anywhere from a week to a month to get the permit. They know me over there I shouldn't have any problems pushing it through pretty quick. That leaves the outside. Do you still remember how to work a paint sprayer?" Paul asked Ed.

"I painted two of your houses one semester break."

"What do you remember?"

"First you've got to power spray it all down with water to get rid of dirt and bugs."

"No, first you plan your work. I would do one of your side walls at a time. There are no windows so the taping is less. So first you spray it all down and then tape. One guy with one sprayer should be able to do one wall in one

long day. Then what?" Pauli questioned Ed seeing what he remembered.

"Clean the equipment especially the nozzle."

"Yeah, especially the nozzle. When everything is working it all flows along great. If you screw up the nozzle you'll be talking to yourself for hours trying to get it right. Clean the equipment."

"I know, I know." Ed said.

"You can use my equipment, just bring it back the way you found it. The front of the building will take a little more planning as well as taping. You really need to think through curb appeal. I'm no good at it. I know you are going to need to sand and refinish the door with some new hardware. I like your idea of putting on some window treatments. I think your idea of building some planter boxes on either side of the entrance way is a little light. Talk to some friends who have an eye for this stuff. You're blessed with having a lot of land and a parking lot that is in good shape. You might want to use some of that land to make a bigger landscaping statement. That's for you to figure out. With your labor and my equipment, you should be able to get this place painted for a couple a grand. The landscaping could be anywhere from \$300 TO \$50,000. Again, with you doing all the work I bet you can get a good look for \$2,000."

"Uncle Pauly you are great. Let Gene and I talk it over. If we say yes, what do you need up front."

"\$2,000 when you say yes and another \$8,000 after we get the permit and I order the equipment and the rest at the end of the job."

"Paul, that is more than fair. Let me talk it over with Ed and we'll call you tomorrow."

"I don't believe what just happened." Gene said with a look of amazement.

"Yeah, my family came through pretty good."

"Pretty good, are you kidding me? I felt pretty good with you Ed but tying into the whole family skill package is out of sight. Tell me about this computer stuff."

"That's big. I knew we were going to have to do something with the bookkeeping, but inventory controls and cost analysis was down the road in my plan. This gives us the whole package and more. The real benefit is that I already know the system. With what Henry is giving us we can be changed over in a couple days. It really is huge."

Gene then added. "Then your Uncle Paul. That guy really has got it together. I gotta tell you I wasn't convinced about your estimates. I'm convinced about his."

"If you want another bid you can call another contractor, but I bet the bid will be at least double."

"Why would I want to do that? I'm riding the family deal. It's rug cutting time, are you sure you want to do this?"

"Positive."

"Call your uncle and tell him it's a go. I'll cut him a check. What a great day. Hell, I feel younger. I need one more thing."

"What do you need?"

"I want another story from our book."

"Really? Shouldn't we stay focused on the restaurant?"

"We will but remember I'm not going to let the book deal fall to the wayside. I want stories. I want to hear about the land rush."

"Ok, ok, I'll tell you another story but it's 45 years and 2,000 miles away from the land rush in Buffalo."

"You're talking the city, not the animal."

"Yeah Buffalo, New York."

"How did we get to Buffalo?"

"By the Erie Canal actually. Great great grampa Foster was an Irish immigrant who along with his mom and dad wanted to get out of New York City where they landed. Too many people. They got on the Erie Canal and went to Buffalo. I don't have all the details but I know that being immigrants and changing cities made it hard for Foster to go to school. His Mom taught him numbers and letters and his dad taught him a trade."

"What?"

"Carpentry. Even back then there were two types of carpenters, rough and finish. Foster learned both from his dad which is important, especially in Buffalo."

"Why?"

"Rough carpenters did mostly outside work on erecting houses. It must be precise but nothing like finish carpenters. That work is much more precise. You're putting in floors, molding, counters, shelves. You can't be off by a quarter inch with this work. Many good rough carpenters couldn't handle the exact requirements of finish work. Foster and his dad knew both. When winter hits,"

"As it does in Buffalo." Gene added.

"Yeah, a lot of the outside work dries up, but there's still a lot of finish work available. It's still cold but you can work. So, Foster had a trade that he could always use to find work at a reasonable wage. As he turned 22 he lost both his mom and dad. I don't know from what. There were a couple things I noticed during my research that kind of blew my mind. First was longevity and second was what things cost. The longevity thing is hard to get your head around. People died young for reasons we can't imagine. Medications were few and, in some cases, all wrong. You could easily die from a cold. If you cut yourself, it could easily get infected and kill you. Open flames were everywhere for cooking and heating, yet fire protection was horrible. A kitchen fire in one house could take out a whole block before it was brought under control. There were few safety provisions in anything. Refrigeration was scarce and ineffective, so food poisoning was a real issue. Diet was based upon availability. Nobody knew about food groups they just ate what they had to get rid of the hunger. You put it all together and people just died early. 50 was old. Back then you'd be dead by now."

"Thanks for that."

"It was just the reality of the times. So, Foster's mom and dad died in their forties leaving Foster to fend for himself. But he had a paying trade. He ate well, had a warm place to stay and somehow saved a little bit from

every payday. He always had good tools and the right clothes to work in. In fact, that's how he met the woman who would become his wife. He needed a new pair of work boots. The cobbler had resoled his boots a couple times but after 6 years they needed to be replaced. At the shoe/boot shop/millinery he picked out and tried on a pair and was about to take them to the counter when he noticed that there were two clerks, and one was really pretty. He waited, like he was still deciding, until the right clerk was available. He then went over to pay. Sarah was already keeping a diary and her description of Foster from this first meeting was cool. She wrote that this customer was ruggedly handsome, soft spoken and smart. She then sold him up."

"What?"

"Yeah, he had picked out a pair of \$3 boots and she talked him into buying \$5 ones. She said, "I take it you are a tradesman sir."

"Yes, a carpenter,"

"Do you buy cheap tools?"

"Never."

"Then why buy cheap boots. She walked over to the shelf, pulled another pair and showed the difference in the leather, soles and stitching. The boots you picked are fine for a dandy but not a hard-working man."

Foster watched Sarah and hung on every word. He bought the boots. As he was paying, he asked if Sarah might be available for an afternoon stroll this Saturday. She paused for a moment, took a good hard look, and then said yes. That was the start of my family tree and the end of today's story. We've got work to do."

"Ok, ok we'll go back to work. I can't wait to hear what's next."

"I think I'm going to change up how I'm telling the stories and how it will end up in the book."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I've been telling the stories about people who lived in the past. I think I'm going to start telling it as if I'm the character. Initially it will be Foster and sometime Sarah. But as we move along, I will be other family members living, telling the story. It might get a little complicated, but I think it will be easier to make the stories real."

"Sounds good to me. Just keep telling it."

"I'm off to the kitchen."

"I've got the bar to clean up and stock."

I want stories. I want to hear about the land rush."

"That was the start of my family tree and the end of today's story. We've got work to do."

"Ok, ok we'll go back to work. I can't wait to hear what's next."

"Good morning partner."

"Morning Gene. Anything new?"

"Yeah, Paul came by with a couple guys, did some measuring and picked up his check. We're in it now."

"Yes, we are. Here I've got something for you to look at". Ed unrolls a 2-foot by 3-foot paper. "Here's your kitchen."

"This is cool."

"I took all the measurements yesterday and plotted it out last night. It's all to scale. I stopped by Henry's and picked up the literature on the pizza conveyor. It's about \$2,800. If we see that the rest of our numbers are still coming in right, then it would be a good purchase. I took the measurements and plotted it in here. The flow for cooking and serving works well with the position of the stove and prep table. We can pound out the meals if we can sell them."

"I think once we get it going it will sell."

"How about a quick test?" Ed asked.

"What do you mean?"

"I bought the stuff I need to make our first batch of pizzas. Tonight, is Friday and you always have a good happy hour crowd. I can mix up a double batch of dough, cut them into dough balls for 12" pies, rig up a proofing cabinet and make our first 20 pies tonight."

"You're kidding right?"

"No, I told you I know how to do this. I figure we will make 4 kinds. Cheese, cheese and pepperoni, vegetarian and garlic chicken."

"Garlic chicken? I've never had a garlic chicken pizza."

"Well, you will tonight. Your crowd gets thick starting about 5:00. I'll set out the first 4 pies at 5:30 and see how the folks like it. It takes about 15 minutes to make each of the next batches. Let's see who eats what."

"Well, the pepperoni will go first, then the cheese. I don't know who is going to eat the other 2."

"Let's just see what happens. I'll party cut them, so you don't get a full slice. I get about 20 servings to a pie. I bet people are going to at least try the others."

Gene asked, "You were able to get everything you need to make' em?"

"Yeah, I'll be able to get better and cheaper once we start buying for real. I found a good mozzarella and pepperoni. The butcher Tom was nice enough to thin slice the pepperoni for me. That reminds me we are going to need a slicer. The veggies were easy to get. I bought 4 lbs. of chicken breast. I'll cook them up and dice them. We'll be able to buy that already prepped by the case."

"Cases of chopped chicken for garlic chicken pizza. Really?"

"No, we'll need it for the BBQ chicken pizza as well."

"BBQ chicken pizza? Come on."

"Wait till you see the Hawaiian. Have faith partner."

"Hey, I'm in. By the way Bill brought the papers by. He was a little confused about the book thing. I explained it the best I could. He decided we needed two contracts, one for the restaurant and one for what he called intellectual property."

"I looked them over. They seemed pretty clear. I think he got the facts right."

"I'll look it over too. If there is anything wrong we can talk about it later. I want to get going on my dough."

"OK, but remember I want another story later."

"Gene we've got stuff to do."

"I know, I know but I'm going to keep pressing you on the stories."

"Ok, to get set up mix and make the dough balls takes about 90 minutes. To cut all the veggies and make my sauces takes another hour. The balls need to proof for a couple hours. So once I look at the contracts, I should have a half an hour for story telling time. Is that ok?"

"That will be fine my young friend. Hey, I'm going to keep you on this book thing. That's our retirement."

"From your lips to God's ears."

"I got to go to work."

"Me too. Friday is a pretty good lunch day and I've got to stock up good for happy hour. I've got Bill coming in at 3:00 to finish setting up the bar and help tending bar tonight. Harry is coming in at 9:30 to set up the kitchen for lunch."

"I've seen what he does. I can stay out of his way."

Ed goes in the kitchen and sets up at a side table that is seldom used at lunch. He moved the mixer, flour, yeast, measuring cups and the like. He's done this a bunch of times before at Henry's place. They never sold pizza on the menu but sometimes they would set it out for appetizers. A single batch made enough for 12, 12" pizzas. The Hobart mixer could handle a double batch. Hell let's make 2 batches. That's 48 pies. They'll keep and we can use them throughout the weekend. We had cookie sheets and even a cookie sheet rack on wheels. I can fit 6 dough balls on a sheet. So I need 8 sheets. Ed knew they didn't have a scale, so he bought one and brought it with him. So he mixed and dumped the dough on the table that he had previously floured. He cut and weighed to make each ball 5 oz. He continues this procedure until he had all 8 racks filled and stacked on the rack. He had bought a large roll of cheese cloth. He measured, cut and covered three sides of the rack. He did the same thing on the front but it was cut vertically in half so you could move it aside for loading and unloading. He knew he had to upgrade this equipment but that this would work for now.

Ed had met Harry the day before. He was mid-thirties, wore glasses and was a little overweight. Most cooks are

plump. Harry was a nice guy and could tell something was going on. He didn't know what kind of train we were building but he knew he wanted to be on it. He watched intently as Ed made the dough.

Finally, Harry said, "Wow, we're finally going to use the mixer. That's great. Making pizzas huh?"

"Yeah."

"God I hate serving those frozen things we've got. Can you teach me how to make the dough?"

Ed had noticed a couple things about Harry that he liked. He came to work in a clean outfit and looked well groomed. He worked off a list that he prepared before he got to work. He was friendly to the servers, well actually to everybody and he washed his hands a lot. It sounds simple but teaching cooks and servers to wash their hands every few minutes is hard if they aren't already in the habit. Harry had it down. Some cooks wear gloves. The problem is that they often give you a false sense of security on cleanliness. If you are wearing a glove and touch something, then the glove is dirty just like your hand would be. But because you're wearing the glove you somehow think your clean. I've always liked bare hands with lots of washing. It looks like Harry liked that too.

"Are you caught up on your prep for lunch?" Ed asked.

"Yeah, dinner too. Not much prep with this menu."

"Yeah, I know. That's gonna change a little."

Harry asked. "This is exciting. Are we really going to start serving good food? Maybe I said that wrong."

"No, I know what you mean. The food you serve is good, it just isn't good. They both laughed a little."

The kitchen had a six-burner stove. Ed asked Harry if there were a couple burners that he didn't need for lunch. No problem. Ed trimmed his chicken and put it on to boil. He then fried up 5 lbs. of 81% lean ground beef and calendared it to drain the grease. Using the same pan, he fried up 5 lbs. of chicken parmesan spicy sausage that he had taken out of the links it came in. Harry enters the conversation "What are we changing first?"

"Well first we make a real meat sauce." Gene already had #10 cans of tomato sauce that he served as is on his pasta. Ed combined 2 cans of that with the meat and two cans of crushed tomatoes that he bought. "You know you add a little Italian seasoning and you now have a meat sauce to be proud of. The spices in the chicken parmesan are what made it special."

Harry took a spoon and sampled the sauce. "God, that's great", he said as he started to dip his spoon for a second taste.

"STOP!" Ed exclaimed.

Harry stood frozen, spoon in hand.

"You never dip twice, ever." He pointed to the counter where he had 5 or six spoons setting. "We've got lots of spoons. Once it touches your mouth it never goes back in the pot."

Harry nodded, "you're right." He picked up another spoon and took another taste. That's a great sauce."

"On to my butter sauce. This is easy to make and has multiple uses I start with just butter and garlic. I save 2/3 of that in one container. That's for garlic bread and pizza crusts. The other 1/3 I add lemon and use for the garlic

chicken pizzas and some pasta dishes to be created later.”

Harry said, “I like what I see. These changes are great. I assume you have some more. When you have a chance I’ve got a couple ideas you might like. I like Gene and I really like working here. I’m good at learning new stuff. I hope I fit in the plans you have for this place.”

“Well Gene says you’re loyal, hardworking and always show up on time. That’s a pretty good start in my book. Yeah, there are going to be some changes, mostly to the menu. I’ll value your opinion on each.”

Ed finished up cutting his veggies and moved on to reading the contracts.

Gene said, “I walked by a couple times. It looked like you were busy in the kitchen.”

“Yeah, I got some stuff done. In addition to debuting our pizzas at your happy hour we are going to sell them in the dining room.”

Gene asked, “You sure you don’t want to try them out on the free crowd first?”

“Have faith Gene.”

“You keep saying that. I haven’t broken week yet. You are moving along at a pretty good pace.”

“I might as well tell you about the other surprises for tonight.”

“Ok, I’m listening.”

“Tonight we have a pasta special, spaghetti with a new special meat sauce. That costs \$5.99 and comes with a Caesar salad for an extra dollar. The Caesar salad alone is \$2.50 and a chicken Caesar salad is \$4.00. By the way the cheese pizza is \$7.00 with the others \$8.50. Oh yeah, we will also be selling onion rings same size and same price as your French fries. I’ve prepped three trays good for about 20 servings. I’ll be putting those out at the bar too.”

“Are you sure you can do all of this? I know, I know, have faith.”

“It sounds like more than it is. Harry is here in the kitchen. He’s never been overworked back there even on a Friday. He already makes pasta. He usually sells it with those horrible frozen meatballs you’ve got. Now we can offer a good pasta dish. The sauce is already made. I’ve got 12 heads of fresh romaine, bag of shredded cheese, bag of croutons and a gallon of salad dressing. I’ve got 3 lbs. of chicken breast that I cooked and filleted in to serving size for a chicken Caesar salad. Again, it’s all done. You’ve got your niece Ellen and her friend Karen as servers. Karen usually works the dining room and Ellen works the lounge. Neither one is ever really busy. I’ll be back there with pizzas and onion rings while quarterbacking everything else. Hey, I looked over the contracts. They look good to me.”

“I’m ready to sign. Do you want to have a bottle of champagne?” Gene asked.

“I’d rather have a beer.”

“Me too. Here we go kid. Both of our lives are changing.”

“Hopefully for the better.”

"Here, here." They sign and toast.

Gene then stated, "I figure we've got about an hour before we have to shift into high gear. Tell me a story."

"You're relentless. Ok, we're still in Buffalo. This time I'm going to tell it like I'm Foster. I like waking up early and watching the sun come up before I go to work. Every day, I sit on my front step and look East. I'm glad I live on the edge of town so there are no buildings blocking the view. The dark sky is starting to lighten. This daily show is about to begin. I know where it will appear for two reasons. One is that it's the brightest part of the darkened sky and it's where it came up yesterday, right over that big birch tree about 800 yards out. Here it comes. I love when it shines through that tree. If there's a wind the branches move back and forth making parts of the light blink on and off. Next, she begins to clear the top of the tree and the sky brightens. The birds start singing. This is when you get the first look at how many clouds we have today. It's clear, gonna be a hot one. Off to work"

"It looks like everyone is on time today. It's a good crew. My boss Luke, John and Aaron. Luke doesn't work much. His job is to get the work and make sure we have all the materials we need on the day we need them. Today should be a good day. We're raising the four outside walls of a house. I like doing that. You get to see the results of your labor plus there is no sawing. That we did yesterday. Aaron was the oldest guy on the crew, so he typically gets more of the easy jobs. Like yesterday he held one end of the tape for Luke as he measured each board and made his cut mark. He then stacked all the same size pieces in piles while John and I sawed. All day. About a half hour before lunch, they had finished measuring so Aaron joined in on the sawing. This is my job and I'm not complaining but sawing all day is brutal. If I ever get to run a crew, I'd bust up the work so saw some and hammer some. The same work would get done but it would be easier on the body. The boss likes it this way because he knows what is done and how to set up the next day's work. The good news is that sawing was yesterday and today is hammering and erecting.

My dad taught me that you had to do the job a little bit better than the guy next to you who is doing the same thing. Hammering is a perfect example. Somewhere I learned to count everything I did. So, I would count each hit of the hammer or stroke of the saw. I guess it made the time go faster. It also told you to bear down a little if the same sized board started taking an extra couple of strokes. With hammering it's four hits. We pretty much always used the same wood and same nails for framing. You should be able to drive your nail into position with four hits. The last hit has a different sound as the hammer hits nail and wood. The big lesson was rhythm or speed. When you have a couple people all hammering the same wood, they have a tendency to link up, all hitting at the same time. If you are just a little bit faster than your sound comes to the boss's ear different than the rest. As he listens for a second or two he can tell that you are quicker than the rest of your team. It's the same thing with the pause between nails. If you are faster at taking the nail from your lips and starting to hammer that will be noticed too. If someone is going to be laid off it is usually the slower guy unless he is related to the boss.

Dad had showed me how to make a couple things that came in handy. First were knee pads. Just some cloth folded over a couple times with elastic stitched in on the top and bottom. Dad's set didn't have elastic. Progress. The other was a tool belt. They sold tool belts down at the grange. They were expensive and had hooks to hang just about everything on. All I needed was a loop for my hammer, a loop for whatever screwdriver I was using, a hook to hang my finishing saw and a pouch. I only took my finishing saw if I was working up above. It's a long climb down and up if you need one. The pouch carried nails and a 4" level. Some guys try to "eyeball" everything to level. That doesn't work all the time, especially if you are perched on 16" centered joists reaching out trying to set your wood. Once you nail it in wrong, you either cover it up somehow and make a bad job or you tear it out costing time and sometimes damaging the wood. Good builders and craftsmen want it right.

Sometimes, especially when the work is repetitive, your mind drifts a little. I want to buy a horse, so that comes into my mind a lot. Sometimes I think about running my own crew like Luke. I know what he knows I just don't have what he has. You need a couple horses and a wagon and some bigger tools. That's a lot of money. The guys he works for are really raking it in. This one well-dressed guy, Mr. Dobbs, comes by the site almost every day to check out how we are doing. He bought 6 lots all in a row. We'll get three done and three framed in this season. This winter we will do all the finish work on the last three. The city keeps growing so he'll sell off all six and make real money. To do that you need tons of money. The other thing I used to think about a lot was moving West and buying land. Owning land has always been a dream for my family. Lately I haven't spent too much time thinking about any of this because all I seem to think about is Sarah.

She is so pretty. She's smart, kind and funny. I think of her every time I look at my new boots. Our first walk together took over 2 hours and seemed like ten minutes. We shared family stories. She also lost her parents young and came to work for and live with her aunt at the store. She has a cousin in St. Louis that she hasn't seen in 8 years. Her aunt doesn't have any other local family so she imagines she could take over the store someday. But believe it or not she too wants to head West.

It's so nice to share a dream with someone, even if it is only a dream. We both have pretty good jobs at pretty good money. I could see me, over time, moving up a rung or two and making even better money. She looked like she was going to end up owning a store. The future isn't bad but it's not the dream.

The next week end we went out Saturday and Sunday. Sarah made a picnic lunch both days. Sunday, we went down to Central Park and rode the new carrousel. It was so much fun we rode twice. I've never been much of a talker but with Sarah it was easy. We talked all the time. When we got off the carousel, I told her that I had saved up enough money to buy a horse. Luke owned four horses, three for work and one for himself. He knew a horse guy and would help me pick out a good one. I could stable it with his.

Sarah was so excited. She made me promise that I would take her with me to pick it out. She is so great. I don't know what she is doing with me. She must have other suitors, ones with more money. I don't care why; I'm just hoping it keeps workin' the way it's workin'. On the way home from the park, I took her to the work site.

She stared at the houses for a minute or so and I started to say,

"Wait" she said and stared for a couple minutes more in silence. Finally, she said, "you built those?"

"Well yeah, there's four of us actually but yeah."

"You know how to build those houses?" she asked like it was some great feat.

I see them every day so it was no big thing to me but she was clearly impressed.

"You know how to do all the stuff necessary to build those houses?"

"I'm mostly a carpenter but I know how to do the rest of it."

"Like what?" she asked.

"I know masonry work. I can build a hearth and chimney. That's trickier than you think if you want it to draft right. I know concrete, I can lay brick, I know pumps and I know how to make the site ready to put in the foundation. Houses keep getting better. These are going to have glass windows."

"You could build your own house?" She asked like I was a doctor or something.

"I could build us a house..." both said, "out west."

I can't believe I said that. I really can't believe we both said out west. We had already gotten comfortable with holding hands. I took her hand and began walking her home. She commented on how pretty the sunset was. I shared with her how I watch the sunrise every morning. As we got close to the store I noticed my hand started sweating. Alright, today was monumental. I'm scared to death, but it is time. I've never kissed a girl before. She might pull away. I don't think she'll slap me. She'll just probably pull away. Without saying anything I leaned in to give her a kiss. She didn't move away. It was more than a peck it took a second or two and then I pulled back to see the reaction on her face. But as I started to pull back, much to my amazement she leaned in and kissed me back. This time longer. We did three more of these with the last two holding each other close from top to bottom. Oh my God, I felt her breasts against me. I was afraid she could feel my excited self. I found out later she could.

Neither one of us knew what to say so we just said good night.

My brain was on fire all the way home. I didn't know if I was going to be a carpenter, builder or home steader. I didn't know if I was going to live on in Buffalo or move West. What I did know is that I was going to do everything I could to make Sarah my wife.

"Alright, can we go to work now?"

"Yeah, ok. There is one thing though."

"What?"

"You've shown me lots of restaurant skills that quite frankly I didn't know you had. In fact, I always thought you were a screw up. The one thing that doesn't make any sense is why you don't think your writing is book capable. That was another great story. Your details about the construction work were great. The whole relationship with Sarah and the kiss thing were beautiful. I'm not a big reader but I love it. Let me guess the horse they pick out is Poli?"

"We will get to that when we get to that, right now I've got kitchen work to do."

"OK, ok get to work."

CHAPTER 5 MEETING THE STAFF - TRYING THE NEW FOOD

Ellen and Karen both arrived about 3:30 and began cleaning the tables and setting out the silverware. Ed called them over. "Ellen we've met, Karen, my name is Ed. I just partnered up with Gene on the restaurant and there are going to be a few changes, all good ones, I hope. I want you to know that you two are critical to the future success of this place. OK, here's a question, regardless of what kind it is, what makes a good restaurant?"

Karen said food and price.

Ellen said service.

“Those are the three big ones. Harry and I will make sure you have good well priced food to serve. You are the front line with our customers. Our service needs to be great. I’m not talking old fashioned formal service with serve from the left and clear to the right stuff. I’m talking friendly, attentive and knowledgeable. Let’s start with cleanliness. I saw you wiped down all the tables, good. Now go back and do the chairs. I bet you’ll find crumbs or a smudge on some. Wipe down all the menus. I know some of them are dirty. This next one is a big one, wash your hands. I’m a freak on hand washing. The easiest way to get a customer sick is for a server not to wash their hands enough. I’m doing the same thing with the cooks.”

“Cooks?”

“Right now, there is only a cook but there will be cooks. The rules say you need to wash your hands when you get to work, use the bathroom, have a cigarette, and I hope you don’t smoke, touch your hair or anything else dirty. The problem is that we don’t really notice how often we do those things. The answer is to wash them all the time. During tonight’s shift you should wash your hands at least 10 times. Understand? OK, other safety issues. Don’t run ever. Hopefully, there will be times when we get slammed. We’ll get through it, don’t run. Next there are some busy lanes in the kitchen, try to stay out of them. Harry frequently carries hot pans from the stove to the dish washer as is the same with the pizza station. Stay out of those paths as best you can. We’ve got a double door from the kitchen to the dining room. Always keep right and never hang in a doorway.”

I noticed that Ellen was taking notes. Nice. “Ok, a couple other safety issues. Wet floors. The floor by the dish washer frequently gets wet. If we don’t have a dishwasher, like tonight, then clean up the floor. I’ll have a dry mop back there, if water gets on the floor, then a couple swipes with the mop will make a safety problem go away. Let’s get on to the actual service. I don’t give you stock things to say like the corporate restaurants do. Just be friendly. So when you first approach the table as you’re handing out the menus you can say hi folks how are you tonight? Or hi, I’m Ellen, I’ll be your server tonight or anything like that. It should be friendly and natural. You then ask them if they want anything to drink before the meal. That’s when you ask if they want to hear our specials? Tonight, for instance we have homemade pizzas. We have 4 flavors, cheese, pepperoni, vegetarian and garlic chicken. We also have a delicious new meat pasta sauce that we will be serving over spaghetti with a Caesar salad. A little later on you are going to sample all of this so you can tell the guests what it tastes like.”

“Free food, yeah!”

“Yes, it is free food, but the important part is for you to be able to tell the guests that you tried it and how you felt about it.”

“You mean tell them that we liked it. Karen said.

“No, not unless you did. How is your handwriting?”

“Mine is ok, but Ellen’s is really nice.”

“Ok here is some copy paper that I cut in half. I want each of you to write out a sheet telling our guests what our new items are. Let me see them when you are done.”

They looked at each other and said OK. When they brought them back Ed said “I like the design of this one but the penmanship of the other. By the way, you both spelled Caesar wrong. Do a fresh one and I’ll make copies in the office. Paper clip one to each menu. Oh, about handwriting. Make sure your orders to Harry and I are ledge able.

Tonight, you are going to need to make up a separate slip for the pizzas. Listen we are going to be getting new menus and an easy ordering system. In the meantime, we are going to make do. As we go through the evening I will be here for any questions. OK?"

"Yeah, this should be fun."

Harry had the sauces on the stove and the Italian bread sliced up to make the garlic bread. The deep fryers were on and hot. The pizza ovens were fired up and all the toppings were ready. I had spun the first six dough balls into pies and spread the first four to make. I dressed the pies and put them in the oven. It was 4:45 and the first couple customers were at the bar.

I called Harry over to show him the whole pizza process. "Now here's the secret. What's the worst part of the pizza?"

"The crust, it is usually kind of dry."

"Watch this. You take this liquid garlic butter and brush it on the crust before you put it in. When it comes out you do the same thing. It makes a huge difference." I spun the next four shells and taught Harry how to spread them. The first round of pizzas was finished. I party cut them in to 12 slices and pulled 4 pieces of each off for tasting. I put the balance of the pizza on fresh tins and carried them to the bar. I had already put out small plates and bar napkins.

The bar was pretty full. Gene was talking to a customer as Ed walked in with the pizzas.

"What's this? A customer asked.

"Free Pizza." Gene said.

"You never give shit away."

"Times are changing. In fact, hey folks listen up. Today was a big day for me. I partnered up with Ed over here. Over the next month or two you are going to see some changes you are going to like. Some are on the food."

"Thank God." Many laughed.

Gene continued, "Let me introduce Ed. Many of you know his brother Henry. Well guess what, Ed has many of the same restaurant skills. Ed tell everyone what we're giving away tonight."

"Greetings and welcome. As of tonight, we are cooking all new home-made pizzas. There will be many but tonight I'm serving 4 kinds. For the traditional customer I have cheese and cheese and pepperoni. I also have a vegetarian. The last one doesn't much look like a pizza because it doesn't have any tomato sauce. It is garlic chicken. It is chicken, herbs and finely sliced scallions on a crust that is covered in a garlic/butter/lemon sauce. It's different but I think you'll like it. We will be serving these tonight in the dining room along with another new item. I made up a tasty meat sauce to serve on our pasta. Tonight, we are serving that with a Caesar salad and fresh garlic bread for \$5.00. A little later I will be bringing out another new item, fresh homemade onion rings. Everything is available for take home. Over the next month or so we are going to be sprucing up the place while we incorporate a whole new menu. In addition to food items the bar will start serving some micro brews and expresso coffee drinks. We hope you will like the changes. Enjoy the pizzas."

Some people clapped. Many headed for the free food.

"Gene what's going on here?" A regular customer asked.

"Hey, I've been limping along with this rusty bucket for decades. I needed some new energy, new blood."

"Hey Gene, this is good." Another customer chimed in.

"Did you guys taste the crust? How does he do that?"

Gene explained how Ed paints the crust.

"Hey, did you guys try the chicken one? It's great. It's not pizza but it is tasty."

"I get the microbrew thing; you should have done that a long time ago but espresso? Gene, are you gonna be a barista?"

"I don't know what that is but if you mean am I going to make coffee drinks, then I guess so. They tell me I can learn."

Somebody made an old dog comment while others were ordering drinks.

Ed came back in with a big tray of onion rings and two squeeze bottles of ketchup. People got up and followed him to the serving table to be first in line. Ed checked the pies. As predicted pepperoni first, followed by the other three, vegetarian being the last.

In another 5 minutes the next batch will be ready. This time he had made an extra pepperoni and no vegetarian. Good call.

The bar was busy so Gene didn't have a lot of time to talk but lots of folks were congratulating him and everyone had good comments on the food. This was fun.

The bar action lulled for a minute and one regular customer, Tom, asked Gene. "Is Henry in on this new venture?"

"No but he has been helping. He came down and went over our ideas. You know I say our ideas but truthfully the ideas are all Ed's. Anyway, Henry came down, liked what he saw and offered some computer help and training help. He was real good to us."

"Yeah, Henry has always been a good guy and he runs a great place. I never knew Ed much. Remember, you've still got Wyatt to consider."

"Hey, the boys didn't have anything to do with that."

"I know but.."

"Hey, don't give me any of that apple and tree shit. Both brothers are quality men. I'm way proud of Ed and what he is doing."

"Ok, Ok I wasn't saying anything."

"Good. You need a refill?"

"Sure."

As Ed was walking through the dining room to the kitchen, he heard Ellen explain the menu to a table of guests.

"You've really got to try the new pizzas. I sampled all of them and they are great. The pasta sauce with the Caesar salad is a winner too. Ed made up this sauce that is out of sight."

"Who's Ed?" The customer questioned.

"It's Gene's new partner. They're upgrading the whole place. We're all excited about it."

Ed thought, perfect.

Four tables in the dining room were filled with a couple at the door. Ed greeted and seated the new folks.

When he got back to the kitchen there were three orders for pizzas. He started spinning and Harry started spreading. Ed took care of the toppings and firing. Harry stayed on top of the rest of the orders including the salads. It was working.

Ellen went out to the bar to hustle drinks and see if anyone wanted dinner. She noticed people who normally had a drink or two and then left stayed and ordered a pizza. She overheard one guy calling a friend to come down. This was cool. She reported this back to Ed.

"That's great. On your next trip through tell them that they can order pizzas half and half if they want to try the different flavors. Also remind them that everything is available for take home. Tell 'em it takes about as long as having a drink."

The bar stayed busy until after 9:00. Ed took out two more rounds of free pizzas and three more trays of onion rings. The dining room was a little busier than usual but not much. Lounge food sales were way up there. 13 pizzas, 7 orders of onion rings and three pastas went out take home. The dining room was empty. There were four people at the bar watching tv. It was time for a meeting.

Gene called everyone over to a table in the back of the bar. Bill made sure the customers were topped off and joined in, Gene brought a pitcher of beer and some glasses. Ellen had her diet coke.

Everybody was smiling waiting for Gene to say something.

"Wow. All I can say is wow. No advertising, no promotion, hell even I didn't know this was going to happen until today and look what happened. This was the best Friday night we have ever had. Ladies how did you like it?"

"The people loved the food. We made more than twice the tips as usual. Everybody seemed happy about the changes you are making. It was great."

Harry said, "it got really busy back there. It was great. I loved seeing the plates come back empty."

Ed said, "Look I know I sprung this on everybody with no warning. I'm tickled with how you all responded. Tonight, was a glimpse of what a weeknight will look like."

"Get out. Are you kidding? If this is a Wednesday what does the weekend look like?"

"More crowded and longer. Just hang in with us as we make our changes. Let me tell you the first one. I need a dishwasher from 6:00 to 10:00 tomorrow. Anybody know anyone?"

"My brother could use the work. He's 18 and he doesn't smoke."

Ed noted the smoking remark from when he met with the girls earlier. "Good bring him in at 5:30 to fill out the paperwork. You need to call me if he can't make it. I need to know I've got it covered. In fact, everyone write down my cell number. It's on me all the time. Tonight, because we don't have a dishwasher, we have a lot of clean up to do. Ok, who's on lunch tomorrow?"

"I am." Ellen said.

"Ok you get the early quit tomorrow night."

"I don't mind staying especially if we're busy."

"Look tonight we knew we had the happy hour crowd to work with. Our Saturday action hasn't been that strong so I'm not expecting to blow the doors off this thing until we can get the word out. But hopefully we'll have a pretty good night. By the way, tomorrow night we're adding homemade lasagna."

Gene's eyes go up and then says, "I know, have faith. All right everybody let's clean up. Thank you all for a job well done."

Ed starts to get up as Gene signals for him to stay.

"Do you have any idea of how proud I am of you right now?"

"You mean us." Ed said.

"Yeah, the guys did great. But tonight was all you. Can we really get this place rolling like this?"

"I don't see why not. Remember nobody knows about us yet. Wait 'till we get the delivery business going. Yeah, I think it's gonna work."

Gene then said, "By the way, you bought a lot of food. Did you keep the receipts?"

"I keep everything. Turn them in tonight I'll get you a check tomorrow.""

"Let me get through the weekend buys. We can work it out next week. You know what I was impressed with tonight?"

"What?" Gene asked.

"The take outs. I made 48 pie shells. I put out 12 at the bar and I have three left. We sold 33 pies. I'll tell you I'm glad I made a double batch. I thought I had enough for the whole weekend."

"Looks like you are making more tomorrow. By the way, order that pizza conveyor thing of yours. You are talking to a believer. Hey look..."

"Gene please no. I'm exhausted. No story tonight."

"I wasn't going to ask that. I was merely going to say thank you. Can I have a story tomorrow?"

"You're brutal. Come on let's clean up."

Ed walked through the dining room, it looked good. As he got to the kitchen Harry was putting all the food away and the ladies were wiping down all the flat surfaces. Ed checked all the containers to make sure they were sealed properly. Good. Ellen had swept the floor. Ed went back and filled the mop bucket and began mopping the floor starting at the dish washer. About 5 strokes in Harry and Karen both came over to take his place.

"Hey, you're the brains of this operation. We'll mop."

"Well, if I had a better brain, I would have had a dishwasher tonight. I got it. You guys did great tonight. I am impressed. Thank you." He finished mopping.

Everyone finished up said good night and went home. Ed was working on tomorrow's shopping list when he saw the lights go out in the bar. Gene walked in and said, "Ed, it was a battle well fought but it is time to lay your sword down for the night."

"Yeah, I'm done. I'll walk out with you. They shut off the lights and looked around. You could hear the compressors running on the refrigeration. The restaurant takes on a weird look with the lights off. It always amazed Gene how many lights are on when the lights are off. You've got a small light over the register showing the open empty drawer. Little LED lights on Exit signs, computer, and coolers. In the kitchen more lights on walk-ins, freezers, microwave, and some of the outside security lighting coming in the window.

As they got to the parking lot they shook hands and said goodnight and then each independently and simultaneously added "partner".

Chapter 6 NEW NAME, FOOD AND IMPROVEMENTS - THE FAIR, AUNT HELEN AND POLI

The next day Ed shows up at the restaurant about 10:00 with a full truck of stuff. As he was backing up to unload Gene pulled in.

"How's it going?" Ed asked.

"OK, let me help you unload. What's with the pizza boxes? I've got pizza boxes."

"Yeah, I know but these are for large pizzas. I also bought 6 tins to cook them on. I've got all my stuff to reload plus the ingredients for my lasagna."

Gene asked, "I'm learning not to doubt you but do we need the lasagna yet?"

"Yeah, let's keep the buzz going. If nothing else, it shows progress to our regulars and staff."

"Hey, I've got faith. Once we get unloaded let's have a short tactical meeting."

"Sounds good."

Ed and Gene put everything where it belonged and then took seats in the dining room.

Gene asked. "I know we are doing good but are we learning along the way?"

"Yeah, I think so. Harry and the ladies are picking up everything I throw at them and I have a few more things to throw. Having a dishwasher tonight is huge. That will make everyone's life easier. I've got a few things to tell Uncle Pauly to add to his list."

"Like what?"

"I need the window between the kitchen and bar to be expanded and I need half of it to have an overhead heat lamp. I need another heat lamp over where the dinners come out from the stove. The construction and the cost of the heat lamps are no big deal. I need to make sure that Pauly knows what kind of power they draw and that we are prepared for it. We need to pull the trigger on ordering the micro beers, coffee machine, and TVs. I need to hook up with my brother on the computer system. I also want to find out who does his menus. Before we finalize the menus, I need to figure out what we are actually going to be serving. In the meantime we need to make up a simple menu in color on the computer. We can print out a couple dozen and laminate them. That will get us through. A couple more things. I've got a friend I went to high school with that still lives in town. She went to school to be an interior designer. She found out there are no jobs like that around. She is now running an office for an insurance company. Anyway, she's got the eye. I want to invite her over (for free) and toss around some ideas for a new look both inside and out. Lastly, I've been thinking about a new name. Do you have any ideas?"

"Wait a minute. We both worked our balls off last night and had a great success. We both pull in here at 10:00 but you've got a truck full of stuff you spent the morning buying. Then you come in sit down and machinegun off a half dozen great ideas while I've got nothing."

Ed said, "Well, I've been thinking about this stuff for a while. Here's something you can do, call your beer guy and find out what micro brews he carries."

"He's coming in with a delivery later. I'll call and give him a heads up. I saw that Price Club over in Breckenridge is having a TV sale. I'm going to drive over after lunch and check them out."

"Make sure they know what we're doing. We want them installed and hooked up to our speakers. I can do a lot of menial work, but I don't want to take that on. You need to know what you're doing for that. We need volume control on each one. We might have different games on at the same time. Have you thought where you want them?"

"Yeah, I think so. Getting back to your question, I've been thinking about names, but I haven't come up with anything good. How about you?"

"Yeah, I've thought of a couple, but one is sticking in my head. The name now is The Rusty Bucket but what do people call it?"

"The Bucket."

"How about the Shiny Bucket? People are still going to call it the Bucket but it kind of announces the changes we're making. We can even replace that Rusty bucket you have near the entranceway with a shiny one."

"The Shiny Bucket. That's cool, I like it. Maybe we should run it by your brother and that design lady of yours."

"Good idea. I need to call Henry anyway. I want to find out who does their menus. I also want to chase the computer thing without sounding desperate. We really need that system. Look, no time for stories today."

"We'll see. Maybe this afternoon once we have a handle on things. Maybe just a short one."

"You're killing me."

They both went to work. Ed put in a call to Leslie. She said she'd be happy to help. She suggested she would come by after the dinner rush about 8:30. Ed said to move it up to 8:00 and he'd feed her first. All good.

Ed called Henry on his cell and asked if he had a minute or so to talk. Henry said sure and immediately interjected that Stan his computer guy was planning on coming over on Monday morning to hook up the computer, printers and software.

Wow didn't even have to ask. They talked about the name. Henry liked it. He gave them the name for his menu guy but said they are print people. They aren't very good with design, even though they think they are. You really have to work out the design on your own. What a cool phone call. Two busy guys, taking a minute to share ideas. Henry offering a hand to little brother without even being asked. I guess this is what family is supposed to be like. Great.

Ed called the equipment guy to order the conveyer. It could be installed next Thursday. He gave a list of stuff necessary for the installation. Ed took good notes. He then called the coffee guy. He could deliver and install on Wednesday but needed the site to be cleared, ready and serviced by power and water. Again, Ed took good notes. Ed then called Uncle Pauly to make sure he could make the preparations prior to each installation. All good.

Ed thought now that I've got all the executive functions done it is time to get to the real work. Harry was walking in while Ed was mixing up the dough. He watched and again took note of the recipe. As the dough was thickening in the Hobart Ed showed Harry a safety issue. He turned off the mixer and pushed the dough down the sides of the bowl towards the bottom with a heavy spatula. It usually spins up while it is mixing. I've seen guys do this while it is still spinning. Big time dangerous. If your spoon hits the blade you're going for a ride. ALWAYS turn it off before you dip. Harry nodded compliance.

Harry then asked, "what's new for today?"

"We'll be offering last night's menu for today's lunch. Tonight, we are going to also offer lasagna and 16" pizzas. I bought boxes for takeout. Lots of new stuff happening next week."

"I can't wait." He began prepping for lunch.

Ed quickly prepped dough balls from the first batch in case he needed them for lunch. He then went on to the second batch after he made his meat sauce and a couple trays of onion rings. The first customers came in for lunch. They sold 4 pizzas in the dining room and 2 at the bar. Everybody loved them. About 1:00 Uncle Pauly came in, sat at the bar and ordered a pie along with a beer. While waiting for lunch Pauly walked into the kitchen made some notes and then went behind the bar. He asked Gene, "You guys are still closed on Monday?"

Gene nodded and Pauly said "I can have Tom down here to get you ready for your installations."

Gene looked up and said "what?"

Ed came in and said, "sorry, I didn't tell you yet, we've got the coffee machine being installed on Tuesday and the conveyer on Thursday."

Gene added, "Damn, things are moving fast. The beer guy is bringing the micros this afternoon."

Paul says, "the roller coaster ride begins. This pizza is great."

Gene added, "I guess I need to get up to speed. Paul, do your guys know how to hook up TVs?

"Yeah sure, you want them hooked into your speakers, right?"

"Yeah, with individual volume controls."

"Yeah, we could do all that on Monday. It's the same guy. Will you have the TVs?"

"Yeah, I'm going over to Price Club tomorrow."

"Where are you putting them?" Pauli asked, "Make sure what you buy will fit the space."

"They're going here and there. I've got lots of room. I'm keeping this one at the bar."

"Yeah, no problem, Ed do you have the specs on your conveyer?"

"Sure. By the way I'm going to need a couple heat lamps here and another in the kitchen. I haven't researched it yet so I don't know what power they draw."

"I've done them before. No biggie. You aren't doing that now are you? I can get your conveyer, TVs and coffee hooked up, but I want a different guy to do all your electrical. That's a couple weeks out."

"That's fine."

Paul left and Ed went back to clean up after lunch and make his lasagna. Harry came over to watch the lasagna prep.

Ed began his teaching, "There are a couple things you have to watch when you're making lasagna. First spray down the pan well with oil. Next start with a good layer of sauce on the bottom. I mix up my ricotta with eggs and Italian seasoning and set it here."

"One egg per pound of ricotta, right?"

"No two. It makes it better. I have my can of sauce here, my mozzarella here and my lasagna noodles here. That way it's easy to build it. You go noodle, ricotta, noodle mozz and then noodle ricotta noodle mozz. The big thing to remember is to make sure your layers go all the way to the edges. Each layer gets sauce especially on the edges. I've seen lots of lasagna dried up near wrinkly on the edge. You have to pay attention to make sure the ends all get lots of coverage."

"I notice you don't use your meat sauce."

"No I make a cheese lasagna and serve it with a heavy dollop of meat sauce. That way if you have a vegetarian you can dress it with a non meat sauce."

"Smart."

"It only takes about an hour to cook. You let it sit for 20 minutes to a half hour to set. Then you cut it and put it in the walk in, covered. When you get an order, it takes about 2 minutes in the microwave and it comes out great."

"That's easy, I can't wait to sell that at lunch."

"Tomorrow. Remember it is only good for 2 days. If we have too much give it to the staff. You don't want to serve

it if it goes past 2 days. With a little inventory control, we should always have enough on hand.”

By 3:00 Ed had completed all his tasks. As he was finishing up he noticed the beer guy had arrived.

A couple minutes later Gene called from the bar. “Hey Ed, you gotta minute?”

“Sure, what’s up? I have actually caught up on everything.”

“Well come in here sit down and have a beer. George has been showing how to pour this stuff. He also told me what everybody else is charging. There’s good percentage in this beer if people drink it.”

George said, “they’ll drink it. More and more customers are adding this to their bar.” He finishes by shining up the new taps, gets Gene to sign the paperwork and leaves. Gene pours two beers.

“God that’s good.”

Gene takes a sip, shakes his head a little and says, “ I guess it takes some getting used to. I still like Bud.”

“Well let’s see how the customers like it. Are you ok with all the stuff that’s going on?”

Gene pauses a bit and then says, “you know it’s been 10 days since we first sat down to talk. Less than a week since we decided to hook up. The changes..”

Ed interrupts, “improvements”

“Ok improvements have been coming fast and furious. And it looks like next week will be more. I like ‘em all but I’m older than you. Change comes a little harder for me. I’ll tell you, you’ve got me feeling younger. You know what keeps me sane during all this?”

“Don’t tell me, the stories.” Ed said with almost a sarcastic voice.

“Yeah, the stories. When I go home at night and put my feet up I rethink the stories. It keeps me from thinking about how my rusty bucket is getting shiny. I think about that too and quite frankly I get excited about what this place could be. But the stories give me a break.” Gene pauses and looks at Ed without asking what both know is the question.

“Ok, one more story. Let’s call it a mental health break.”

“Call it what you want but tell me the next story. I still want to get to the land rush.”

“Well, you’ve got a bit of a wait but here comes the next installment. As you remember we ended with the first kiss.”

“Actually, we ended with Foster realizing that he was going to marry Sarah.”

“Yeah right. Well, their next date was to go to the fair that had come to town. Sarah and her aunt lived upstairs over the store. When he called on her, she usually met him at the door downstairs. This time Aunt Hellen was at the door. They had met before, and she seemed nice. Seeing her at the doorway scared Foster a little. Was she going to say to stay away from Sarah. God, I hope not. It turned out to be a pleasant surprise. Aunt Helen

exchanged pleasantries and then invited Foster over for Sunday dinner. "Certainly", he responded, "it would be an honor."

Sarah came down they said goodbye and headed off to the fair.

"Did you see what your Aunt did? I think she likes me."

"Actually, she knows I like you. She wants to know more about you. She's heard me talk about you for hours. I took her by your work site. She was quite impressed."

"This is great. I'm gonna buy a new shirt to wear to dinner. I really need her to like me."

"She will, don't worry. Did you go to the fair last year?"

"I go every year. This is the first time I've gone with anyone. This will be better."

"I've never been. What do you like best?"

"Everything. I like looking at the animals I like the rides. I like some of the weird things they have on display."

"Like the girly shows."

"I don't go to the girly shows. Besides now I've got the pretties girl holding my hand. Why would I want to see anyone else."

"You are so sweet."

They walked around for hours. They saw all the animals. They looked at all the prize-winning vegetables, fruits and jams. Foster asked, "I want to bring something tomorrow for Aunt Helen do you think she'd like one of these jars of jam or should I bring flowers?"

"She'd like the jam, especially the strawberry one."

Foster bought the jam and thought I'm bringing flowers too. I don't want to take chances.

They saw midgets and a black person that must have been 7 feet tall. One person juggled these sticks that had fire on one end. They rode a couple rides. One was especially nice because as the car spun around, Sarah was forced up against Foster. She felt great. They then went over to where a crowd had gathered to watch men pick up a big hammer and swing it down on a lever that sent a metal piece up a column to hopefully hit a bell that was about 18 feet up. Lots of people tried but not many could make it all the way. Meanwhile everyone was watching. It would be embarrassing if you lost but if you won you got a doll as a prize. Foster wasn't as big as some of the other people who tried but he sure had a lot of experience with a hammer. Here we go.

Bam, ding. Bam, ding. The crowd all clapped and screamed. Sarah jumped up and down. She was so cute. She picked out her doll and they moved on.

They had a sandwich and a deep-fried bread covered with sugar called a doughnut. They moved into a barn where people had booths set up selling the newest items out. Foster always looked at the tools. One person had a steam engine. That was amazing especially when he talked about what could be done when you harness that power. Then he saw something he couldn't believe. A toilet. He'd heard about them but he had never seen one. Unfortunately, it wasn't hooked up but Foster could see how it worked. Kind of like a siphon but in reverse. By

pulling a chain a measured amount of water came in to the bowl, the weight of the water caused it all to flush along with whatever else was in the bowl to begin with. What a clever idea. He could see that being in the next round of houses he will build. You need water to the site and then you need pipes to take it all away, I guess to the yard.

Ed watched as Sarah looked at all the lady's finery on display. She made mental note of a couple booths that had product Aunt Helen might want for the store. Ed suggested that maybe she could come by tomorrow morning.

The happy couple finished up with a tall glass of root beer with a scoop of ice cream in it. And then started the walk home. They both knew they were going home but they also knew they were going to kiss some more. They found an empty bench on a secluded path without much light. They sat down and neither hesitated. They kept kissing each other for a long, glorious half hour or so. One time Foster felt Sarah's tongue. He didn't know if she meant to but it sure was exciting. Finally, they both realized it was time to go home. As they walked hand in hand, they talked about all the things they saw tonight. What a great evening. They decided on a long kiss goodnight before they got near home. Then it was a gentlemanly peck at the door in case anyone was watching.

Foster walked home with his feet barely touching the ground.

The next day he had dinner to go to with Sarah and Aunt Helen. He was nervous. He had hoped to buy a new shirt but didn't have time. He got out his best clothes and made sure they looked good. He shined his Sunday shoes. He grabbed the jam he bought the night before and picked some flowers he had eyed the day before. He walked to the store took a deep breath and knocked on the door. Sarah came down wearing a pretty dress he had never seen before and a big smile. She gave him a bigger kiss than he was expecting and walked him upstairs. Their place was really pretty and quite lady like. There were framed pictures on the wall and shelves with pretty teacups and little statues.

Aunt Helen came in from the kitchen taking off her apron along the way. She greeted Foster with a smile and a welcome. As she motioned for him to sit down in the parlor, she asked Sarah to get them all a lemonade. Sarah came back with the three glasses on a serving tray. Wow a serving tray. I'm going to have to be on my best behavior Foster thought.

They started with some small talk about how both families ended up in Buffalo. Helen then said that on Sarah's suggestion she had gone to the fair and set up a buying relationship with 2 different suppliers for the store. They laughed about all the strange stuff at the fair. Everybody liked the jugglers.

Helen then said that dinner was done and asked all to take seats in the dining room. The flowers he brought were in a vase on the dinner table. The meal was simple but tasty. It was a lamb stew with boiled potatoes and green beans. Helen asked if a glass of wine would be ok. Foster nodded his approval. Helen poured out three glasses from a fresh bottle leaving about a serving and a half in the bottle. Foster knew not to ask for a second glass. As it turned out he didn't have to. Helen kept filling his glass saying it was ok for a grown man to have a little wine once in a while. She was so nice.

As they finished their meal Sarah got up and cleared the dishes. She returned with fresh plates and a pie.

Helen said "Sarah made the pie. She's really quite a good cook. Would you like some tea?"

"No thank you. This pie is great. In fact, the whole meal has been great."

Helen then continued the conversation by saying, Sarah walked her by your work site Friday. "That was quite

impressive. I actually saw you up on top hammering boards into place. You actually know how to build those homes?"

"Yeah, as I told Sarah I'm mostly a carpenter, but I know how to do all the jobs necessary to build a house."

"Quite impressive young man. I see why Sarah is infatuated with you. Now she tells me you are going to buy a horse. You are a solid man sir."

Thank you is all Foster could say. He really liked the infatuated part.

After dessert Sarah announced that she and Foster were going to take a walk. Foster got up shook Aunt Helen's hand and thanked her for a great meal. He grabbed his hat and he and Sarah left. Once outside he said, "I think she likes me."

"Oh, she likes you alright but better, yet she now knows why I like you so much."

Foster beamed.

Sarah then said, "I've been meaning to tell you that I got a book from the library on Wednesday, called LIFE ON THE PRAIRIE. It's fascinating. It talks about what to expect, what you need to take with you, what you can pick up along the way and the dangers. It says we both need guns and know how to shoot."

"Guns?"

"Yeah, for hunting and protection. There are dangers out there like Indians and outlaws."

"Are you having second thoughts?"

"No, I find it exciting. But I have to learn many things."

"Like what?" Foster asked.

"Simple medicine and home remedies. I do a little gardening, but it is different if you are growing crops and collecting the seeds you need for the next planting. I need to kill a chicken."

"What?"

"We usually buy our chicken from the butcher where we buy all our meat. The chicken is ready to cook. Twice we were given chickens by a customer that owed Aunt Helen money and had none. They were dead and headless, but I had to pluck them. It took a while, but I did ok. The book says I need to know how to kill them."

"I can kill your chicken."

"I know but I should know how. I also need to know how to skin animals like rabbits. It's part of my job. You already know a bunch of stuff, but you've got to learn some things too."

"I imagine, like what?"

"Like hunting and then butchering. I can do the chickens and rabbits, but you get the deer, steers and sheep."

Foster had never thought about that before. Something to learn.

"Oh, and they made a big thing about finding and drilling for water."

"I'm actually working on that. I know a well digger. I offered to trade him a day of free work if he would teach me what I need to know to drill a well."

"You know it is fun to talk about all this stuff, but the fact is I need a lot of money I don't have to actually go West."

"How much do you think?"

"A couple thousand more than I have if you want to do it right. At the rate I am saving it could take 10 years for me to get there."

"I've saved up a couple hundred. We'll get there. In the meantime, it is fun to dream."

Foster thought to himself, wow she is planning her life to be with me. That is great, wherever we live. They talked a little more and she promised to get Foster the book to read.

She said, "pay attention to the chapter on animal husbandry".

"What?"

"Yes, you have to buy animals, feed animals, sell or butcher animals but in the middle there you need to make little animals. Sometimes you have to help with the birth. By the way that's a good skill to have for births that might be closer to home. Do you want children?"

Stunned at how this conversation had gone Foster quickly said "yes".

"Me too" she said. "I bet you'll make a great father."

The only way this evening could get any better happened when they walked up to their bench sat down and began kissing. After about 25 minutes of blissful kissing Foster withdrew a little and said, I love you. Sarah quickly responded with the same. Both were shocked, overjoyed, and speechless.

They walked home, arm and arm barely speaking. Both were afraid of spoiling the moment that had just happened. They said goodnight, kissed and parted.

Sarah and Foster had busy weeks allowing them only Wednesday evening to see each other. They went out to dinner. They had meatloaf and mashed potatoes and pie that wasn't as good as Sarah's. Sarah gave Foster the book.

Foster asked if she could be ready at 3:00 on Saturday to go look at the horses. Luke knew where the store was and promised to pick them up there. Hopefully they could ride home on his new horse. She happily agreed. They walked home but didn't have time to go to their special place. They knew they would on Saturday.

On Friday Foster went to the bank and got some money from his account. He was going to spend more money on Friday and Saturday than he had in the last 6 months. On Saturday he got to the store about 2:45. Sarah was going upstairs to change. When she came down she had pants on. He had never seen her in pants. They fit good and made her look beautiful. Luke pulled up, made introductions and off to the stable they went.

When they got there Sarah jumped off the wagon and ran off to the coral like a kid running to a swimming hole. She stood on the bottom rail of the fence staring at the horses with a huge smile on her face. Foster tried to look

more businesslike. Thomas the owner came over and introduced himself and then pointed out the three horses he had for sale. One was a stallion and two were mares. Foster knew he wanted a mare. Their names were Spank and Poli.

Gene couldn't hold himself back, "I knew it. This is where Poli comes in."

"Shut up so I can finish this story and get back to work."

"Alright, but I knew it."

Sarah made up her mind immediately. Foster was holding back for 2 reasons. First, he didn't want to look too anxious because Luke was going to try to work the price with Thomas and second, he liked it that Sarah had to convince him to buy the "right" one. This was fun. Sarah would say look how sturdy she looks but couldn't help but then say look how pretty she is.

Luke and Thomas were talking money. Foster entered the conversation. In the closing negotiation Luke offered \$10 less than the last asking price but then added that Thomas should throw in the saddle and tack. The saddle was a little worn but good. The tack looked almost new. Thomas came back with keeping the price the same but throwing in the rest. They shook hands transferred money and saddled Poli. Sarah just barely kept from screaming with joy.

Foster led Poli out of the corral, mounted up and began walking the horse. After getting a feel for the animal he leaned forward and nudged her into a trot. She had a good seat. Some horses bounce terribly in a trot, but Poli gave a nice ride. Foster then clicked his mouth and gave a gentle heel kick and Poli moved into a lope. She ran beautifully. This was so great. He loped on back to the corral where all were standing. Sarah went to Poli and began stroking her. They became friends quickly.

As everyone was saying goodbye Luke offered to ride Sarah home. She said, "no, I'm riding with them."

Thomas said, "the horse can handle it, can you?"

"I'll be ok I've got something good to hang on to."

Luke looked up and said, "yes you do...remember that." All smiled at the double meaning. Luke helped Sarah up on Poli. She slid forward as far as she could, and Foster slid back in the saddle as far as he could. She wrapped her arms around his waist and they began a slow walk off towards home. When they were about 10 seconds down the path Sarah tightened her grip and moved her body in closer pressing against Foster's back. He was happy she couldn't see the stupid grin on Foster's face. Sarah then leaned around and licked Foster's ear lobe sending a shock through his body. She then said it has been too long since I told you I love you. From Foster's position all he could do was squeeze her arm.

Foster turned onto a path that went off the trail leading up to a clearing. He stopped and turned in his saddle. "I want you to hang on tight. First, we are going to trot and that can be a little bumpy. If you feel all right, then I'll go to a lope that is faster and smoother." Sarah nodded enthusiastically.

They had been walking so she knew what that felt like. The trot was exciting but a little rough on the bottom. She then said faster. Foster goaded Poli into a lope. She couldn't believe how fast they were going and how comfortable it was compared to the trot. Her hair was bouncing, and her tears were falling and streaming across her cheeks. Amazing. He then pulled up in the shade of a stand of trees, got off and helped her down. She could

barely talk. She then began talking and couldn't stop. She raved about the horse, him, the ride, the bouncing the wind and even the tears. Finally, she slowed down and stopped.

He said, "I guess that was alright?"

She laughed and slapped him lovingly on the arm. Foster unfolded a blanket he brought with him on the ground. They sat down and began kissing immediately. Somehow, without anyone really leading they ended up lying down next to each other holding closely. Almost all of him was touching almost all of her. Then he sat up. Initially she looked disappointed. He then reached in his pocket, pulled out a small box and got to his knees. "Sarah, I love you and I want to love you for the rest of my life. It might be here or it might be out West but either way I want you by my side forever. Will you marry me?"

Fear was running through his body but thankfully not for long because she immediately said yes. She put on the ring and they began kissing again. It didn't take long before they found themselves in that lying position again. They both liked that. Foster then thought to himself, you know everything is going right why not ask one more thing?

In between kisses Foster said, "you know I like feeling your body next to mine?"

"Yeah, me to."

"Yes, but I really like feeling your breasts when they press up against me."

"Yeah, me too".

"I was hoping that you would let me touch them."

"Nobody has ever touched them but me" she said with a smile.

"Really?" She looked up puzzled.

"No, I wasn't doubting you, your answer made it sound like it was alright."

"We're engaged. I think we should enjoy each other as long as we keep some mysteries for our wedding night."

Foster began softly touching her breasts. "Everything about you is beautiful and soft to the touch but this is uh, uh, I don't even know what to say. I've never felt anything like it."

Foster pushed on. "I was hoping that you would let me see them."

"Nobody has ever seen them but me she said with a smile."

"Really, really"

They laughed as she stared in his eyes and began unfastening her blouse. Foster could see cleavage in her undergarments. Thankfully, she unfastened that as well. Foster had no idea how to untangle that thing. When she was done Foster couldn't stop staring. She was so beautiful. They spent the next 2 hours enjoying each other's caress. What a day.

CHAPTER 7 LESLIE

"OK we stop here. I can't get you all hot and bothered thinking about my great grandmother's boobs. You've got work to do."

"God you are a buzz kill. Besides she wasn't your great whatever at the time...she was a 22-year-old virgin."

"You're a sick man, now let's go to work. Oh, here's something I want you to work on if you're open to it."

"What? sure."

"Keep an eye on the door."

"What do you mean."

"Well, some of our regular customers know what to do and where to go. When we get some new ones they might need some direction. So, a welcome with an invitation to either the dining room or the lounge is in order. By the way it is the lounge not the bar. Give them some menus to look at. Tell them we'll have table service in the lounge but right now they're a little busy in the dining room, but you'd be glad to get them a drink if they are ready to order. Just make them feel comfortable."

"I can do that. Schmooze them a little get them pointed in the right direction and get them started up."

"Yeah, until we get a handle on how busy we are really going to be, we all need to do more than our own job."

"Cool, let's hope we have the problem."

Lunch had been a little busier than expected with two parties coming in because someone they knew was in the night before and raved about the pizzas. That was a good sign.

He was pretty well caught up in the kitchen. He took the girls through making the menu for tonight. He made a couple slices of lasagna for all to taste. Everybody loved it. He spun and spread 2 large and four small pies and racked them ready for toppings. He had sold three servings of onion rings at lunch so he decided to make up four more trays.

The crowd started coming in about 5:00. It was a quick rush, busier than usual. Gene looked back from the bar and said, "we've got some people out here do you want to serve some pizzas again?"

"Why not." He quickly finished them up and threw them in. He also had 3 quick pizza orders from the dining room. More people kept walking in. The dish washer Donnie showed up on time filled out his paperwork and got a lesson from Harry on the use of the dishwasher. Ed then called Donnie over and told him that one of his jobs was to make garlic bread and fill water glasses. Harry took him through garlic bread and Ed showed him the ice machine and glasses and where to put them for the girls.

Just before it had gotten busy Ed had a quick class for the ladies. "I don't think we are going to get slammed tonight but just in case. Customers are always afraid that they aren't noticed or are sitting in a station without a server. It's easy to fix and make them comfortable. First, we all seat people. If you are near the door but have

your hands full just tell the folks nicely that someone will be right with you. Same when they are seated. We need to get them water, menus and a basket of garlic bread. Again, tell them that someone (use a name) like Ellen will be over once she gets her meals out. Then they know they are covered and can read the menu in peace."

Well that actually happened a couple times and everyone performed well. Donnie was clean cut and personable enough that Ed moved him up a notch by having him bus. He delivered the water menus. and garlic bread with a simple greeting. The girls would tell him what sodas they needed and he would fill them from the fountain and set them up. He was a good find. The girls taught him how to clear and clean the tables after the guests left.

The night flew by. It was actually busier than Friday. Plus, we had our first 3 pick-up orders. Fortunately, it was Gene who picked up the phone each time and he knew the menus and pricing. He even knew to sell them up to the new bigger pies because they were a better deal. He took down a name with each order. When he walked the first order back to Ed, he said, "well partner a new leaf has been turned."

Ed never really knew what that expression meant but he knew what Gene meant. The next two times Gene put in the orders he just smiled at Ed.

About 8:00 we were just about getting in control. The place was still mostly full but almost everyone had eaten. That's when Leslie showed up. She walked into the lounge. Gene was doing his hosting/bartending/ phone order taking thing, so he greeted her at the door. They knew each other from previous stops for drinks. When she said she was Leslie here to see Ed, Gene lit up and escorted her to a table. He thanked her for her willingness to put her talent to use in the changeover of the bucket. Gene then said your money is no good here but what are you drinking. She ordered, he delivered and said that Ed is almost caught up and will be right out.

"Leslie said it looks like you were busy?"

"You know Ed has been in charge of the kitchen for 2 days. By coincidence they were the two busiest nights in our history."

"Coincidence huh?"

"Yeah, this guy is really special."

Ed came over and gave Leslie a friendly hug.

Gene walked over with a micro for Ed, and said, " you told me she was smart you didn't mention pretty."

"I don't tell you everything."

"How well I know. How well I know." He walked away.

"Well, your partner thinks you can walk on water."

Ed smiles and says, "He's easily impressed."

"I don't know the two busiest days in the places history is pretty good."

"Wait till you see what's coming. They did a little small talk about whatever happened to whoever, la la la. Then he said let me tell you what's going on in this room and let you ponder design. Remember I've got champagne taste.."

"Yeah and a beer pocketbook."

"More like cool aid"

"I get it."

She said with a smile.

Ed told about the TVs, coffee machine, microbrews, and potential stage activities. She took notes. "So look around and ponder while I take care of a few things in the back. I'll come out in a bit and we can have dinner. I've got a great lasagna with meat sauce and some gourmet pizzas. I wouldn't recommend anything else until I get a chance to change it over."

"Lasagna sounds great. I'll look around here a while and conjure up some ideas."

"Cool, can I get you another drink?"

"I'm good for now, maybe with dinner."

Ed went back in the kitchen and made sure he had a lasagna left. Great, two left. A couple more take-home orders came in from the lounge. Again, I almost ran out of everything.

Harry took Donnie through closing clean up. Ed had a quick meeting with the servers about Donnie.

"OK ladies, was it easier with Donnie helping out?"

"Oh yeah,"

"Certainly."

"Did you make more money on account of him being here?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, you need to share the wealth a little. It is customary to tip out busboys. Always 10% and hopefully 15% of tips."

"We got it Donnie will be taken care of."

"Ok, I'm gonna want to have a meeting later with everyone like we did last night. Right now, I have a dinner meeting with a friend who is going to help us with interior design. Can you go through the closing clean up ok?"

"Gotcha boss."

Ed checked with Harry to take care of the last 3 pies in the oven. He quickly laid out a garlic chicken pizza for himself and put it in the oven. He then went to retrieve Leslie. As they came into the dining room Leslie was already looking around. They took a table and Ed asked if she wanted a drink or perhaps some wine.

"Wine would be nice, Chianti?"

"Got it." He got up went to the bar and returned with a bottle and two glasses. While standing he pulled the cork and jokingly handed it to Leslie.

"I know the wine thing, but I am confident you got it covered. Just serve."

"Do you want to go over your lounge ideas or do you want me to tell you what I'm thinking here."

"Do here first. It might impact the whole thing."

"Ok, I'm thinking Italian, although I don't know what that means. I think I would like a chair rail around the room. I have two bussing stations that get busy with fresh food and dirty dishes. I think I want a heavy plastic or glass wall covering with a washable surface. I haven't thought about table treatments. He lifts his glass and says thank you in advance." They toast.

"Well let me shotgun a couple things. This room looks like a cafeteria. I like the chair rail idea and the washable surface thing by the bus stations. I haven't decided on colors yet, but we need to darken it up. The carpeting is a little worn but I think ok for a while. Your ceiling like in the other room is horrible but correctible inexpensively. I've got an idea for table treatment that you might not like. If you put down a red, red checkered, or burgundy tablecloth then cover it with a Lucite or glass top you get the color you need with a washable surface, so you don't need to change linens." As she refills her glass, she holds up the wicker covered bottle and says "this would be a nice adornment. If you put them out full it could help drive wine sales."

Ellen brings over two Caesar salads and serves them along with garlic bread. She adds that your meals will be out in a couple minutes.

"She seems nice."

"Everybody is doing great. They all learn quickly. So far, I like everything. I don't know if Gene is going to like the glass tabletop idea. We'll see. I'm interested in your ceiling idea."

Leslie was eating her salad and tasting the garlic bread. "If the rest is as good as this you are going to be busy. I need to research colors a little bit. I also need to check out decorative wall coverings. With a little time on the computer, I think I can come up with a palate you'll like."

Ellen came out of the kitchen with the food. She set her tray down at the bus station. She came to the table and moved Leslie's salad off to the left. As she came to Ed, he motioned that he was done. She came back with the lasagna and served it. Leslie said ah! She then brought over the pizza and set it down with two plates stacked next to it. "Well how does that look?"

"Delicious."

"Would you like any extra parmesan or hot peppers?"

"No, I think I'm good."

She topped off the wine glasses and exited.

"She did that well."

"Yes, she did."

Leslie dug into her pasta. She took her first bite, filled her fork again and lifted it as in a salute and spoke. "This is the best lasagna I've ever had."

Ed smiled and began in on his pizza. As he took his second slice he cut off the third and served it on the waiting plate for Leslie to taste. "Try it, you'll like it."

"Working with you could be tough on a girl's waste line."

"You look great."

"I'm glad you noticed." She didn't use her knife and fork but took the pizza to her mouth the way you should and then said, "wow, this is excellent, different but great."

"I've got about another 7 gourmet pizzas I'll be serving. I don't know how they are gonna go over, but we'll have them."

"Hey you offer them but you don't make them until somebody orders, not much risk. Plus, you have a dish that you can't get anywhere else. Good idea."

"I hope so. Tell me your ideas about the bar."

"Well, it's all wood. A couple gallons of varnish or fresh stain would give you a new look. Like it or not with the new TVs you are going to be a sports bar. You need jerseys, banners, pictures and the like. You probably should sponsor a little league football and baseball team. Probably a men's softball team as well. It's great marketing to get new customers and all the pictures and plaques will blend into the motif."

They had finished their dinners. Ellen asked if they wanted dessert, coffee or an after-dinner drink. They said no thank you. Ed said to Leslie, "let's look outside."

They walked out to about 30 feet into the parking lot. Ed said, "let me show you how dumb I am. I know we are painting the whole place and adding some window treatments. Uncle Pauly pointed out that I need to refinish the door and add new hardware. I envisioned 2 landscape boxes on either side of the door. He thought that would look dumb and because we have lots of land suggested a more extensive landscaping plan. I guess he's right, but I don't have a lot of money."

"He's right and you don't need a lot of money. A simple landscape island accenting two entrance pathways on either side can be built with a minor budget. You need site lighting to make it right."

"What's a minor budget?"

"If you are doing the work you can make a nice splash for under \$2,000. You can always make it better later on. But it would look good. The hard part would be digging up two parking spaces and the land around them. After that it is dump dirt and plant. Your closest hose bib is over there on the side. A fifty-foot hose will let you water it ok." They talked over a few more details and went to the bar.

They both ordered a brandy. Gene asked, "well you looked around what do you think?"

"Let me start with the fact that your food and service have skyrocketed since my last visit. But that's not what you are asking about."

"No, but it's great to hear. How do we make it look better?"

Leslie pulled out her notes. Gene was impressed that serious people, like Pauly always take notes and have their

thoughts together instead of shooting from the hip.

Leslie went through her list of improvements to include needing some time to decide on colors for the dining room. They talked about the outside and finally got to the ceilings.

Ed broke in and said, "she hasn't told me her ceiling plan yet."

Leslie began, "all of your ceilings are 2 x 4 drop in tiles that are dirty and smoke stained. Your channels that they sit in are dirty but serviceable. If I was to suggest a change in the ceiling, I would go with a 2 x2 grid and a darker color, probably charcoal grey. The bad news is to do the whole restaurant would cost over \$7,000. My guess is that is not in the budget."

Gene and Ed Nodded.

"Well, they have a paint out now that passes fire code that sells for about \$15 a gallon. So, if you start at closing you can pull all the tiles, get a couple rollers and a place to let them dry. Paint them while someone gives a good cleaning on the gridwork, they are ready to put back in a couple hours later. You end up saving over 90%."

Gene goes, "damn, I like this girl."

Ed agrees and says "we have to work out a timeline. We want a grand opening in a month."

Leslie says, "hey I can get you ready to go in a week or so, but getting the work done is on you. I imagine you have a few other things going on at the same time."

Ed says, "Certainly, and I'm the quarterback of all that. It would be good to know how long it takes to get everything we need on site and your estimate on how many hours it takes to get each job done."

"Ok, how big of a crew are you working with?"

"Me and a guy to be named."

"You are a glutton for punishment. What about the landscaping?"

"I'll get Pauly's guy to dig up the parking lot and run the electric line. I'll talk to a friend who does some landscaping and have him drop off a load or two of soil. If you and I have another dinner meeting, this time at my brother's we can work out what I should buy and where I should put it."

"Dinner here would be fine, maybe better. Give me a couple days to formalize these ideas."

Gene added "We're not too formal here. Scratch out your ideas and we can work with that."

"Maybe you can, but I can't."

"Ok." Almost apologetically. "You have been wonderful, I love your ideas and I want to move forward in making the Rusty Bucket, Shiny."

Leslie then asked, "By the way, you are going to have specials, right?"

Ed says, "yeah bar and dining room."

"You can buy a whiteboard sign for about \$75. Or you can buy a piece of whiteboard and frame it yourself for

about \$10. I've even got an extra easel I can donate. Most of our training has gone to computer. I've got three easels and seldom use any.

"You're the best."

"I'll call you Monday."

Ed walked Leslie to her car thanking her all the way. He returned and saw Gene beaming.

"Let's have a quick meeting and let the staff go. How are you on the glass table covers?"

"I don't know. Why don't we ask the girls?"

They had a quick meeting mostly focused on how Donnie helped the operation. The ladies were told about the table cover idea and they both liked it. They talked about the Sunday schedule and decided to have Donnie come in for a couple hours. After the meeting everyone went back to work at cleaning up except Gene and Ed.

"Well you hit the ball out of the park again. What a great night."

"Hey, our first pick up orders. That was cool. I'm going over to that postal printing place and order some fridge magnets."

"What?"

"Yeah, refrigerator magnets with our name and phone number. We need to be handing them out to everyone. Remember what Henry said, He's a special time restaurant, we're dinner. I want to get us both some cards and talk to them about flyers, coupons and menus."

"Damn, you never slow down. I've never had a business card. I might need to start shining my shoes."

"I don't think we need to go that far, ...yet. Monday is going to be a big day. I think I'm glad we're closed. By the way we need to change that. Once we get the TVs hooked up, we need to plan some specials focused on football. Monday night is part of that."

"I know, it complicates things with scheduling the staff. Being closed on Mondays made things easier."

"Well it's going to get complicated anyway. We're going to need more staff in all departments. We can work days off in there. Right now, I'm trying to focus on tomorrow. I have no idea how much action we are going to get. Business has been picking up just by word of mouth. Can you imagine when we actually start marketing?"

"It scares me and thrills me all at the same time. Hey, I've got faith. This isn't scientific or anything but I've been looking at the numbers. Friday we were up 30% from normal and tonight we're up 40%. Sunday is usually pretty quiet but I think it would be wise to plan for the same kind of increase."

"Yeah, I think so, plus everything will keep. Besides Monday we're going to have lots of people working here. My guess is we will need to feed them."

"Certainly. You've got all these people helping us out for either free or at cost. Yeah, we need to feed them."

"Ok. I'm gonna' reload everything in the kitchen. No new meal for tomorrow."

"Really? How unadventurous of you. Hey, can I switch cars with you tonight?"

"Sure, why?"

"Price Club opens at 9:00 on Sundays. I want to check out the TVs. If I like what I see I'll need your truck to haul them home. My trunk and back seat are clear so you should have enough room to pick up whatever you may need from the stores."

"Works for me. God, I've got stuff to do."

"Don't burn out on me young friend. It's ok to slow down a little bit. Even with your goofy schedule we still have a month. If it takes more, that's fine too."

"I know. None of the things I'm dancing with are that big by themselves. When you put them all together and try to schedule everything it becomes a bit overwhelming. I need a big calendar for the next 6 weeks. Once I plot everything in with little "to do reminder lists" I'll feel more in control."

"Look, go home, kick back, watch a movie or think about your next story for me."

"Your stories are what's killing me."

"I don't think so. Me forcing a story out of you is the only way I know to get the hamster of the spinning wheel."

"I'm the rodent in this tale, right?"

"Well...yes. So far you are handling all this Bucket stuff brilliantly. I sense it is going to get more intense before it settles down. Hopefully, some story telling will keep both of us sane."

"OK, OK, you are probably right. Some days I'm gonna need a break, OK?"

"Yeah, some days, like tonight. Go home. Here's my car keys. They exchange and Ed leaves after some final notes and a goodbye to everyone."

CHAPTER 8 THE PLAN - THE WEDDING

Ed pulls up to the Bucket at about 10:00 with a car full of stuff he needed to prep that day. He unloaded everything and put it all where it needed to go. He started in on making dough. Bill and Harry were already in getting their tasks in order. About 11:00 the girls and Donnie pulled in. A couple minutes later here comes Gene with Ed's truck...full. Donnie was quick to go out and help unloading. Ed walked out and said. "Either my eyes or my math are bad. I count three TVs."

"Yeah, well they were on sale. They came with the mounts, cabling and all the instructions Pauly's guys will need. And I figured out where the third one is going. Have faith." They both smiled.

They unloaded them into the office.

"Are you ok with your stuff?"

"Yeah, Harry is a champ. While he was prepping his stuff he took care of the sauces and salads. He's making the next batch of dough while I make the dough balls. He really is working out great. The ladies took care of the dining room and made more menus, not needing any direction and even Donnie knows how to set up the dishwasher and get the drink station prepared. This crew sure could be a lot worse. Once you're finished checking on Bill and the bar I want to show you something."

"Sure, give me a couple minutes." Gene said.

Ed gathered up some papers he had and spread them out on one of the bigger tables at the bar.

Gene came over, looked down at the table while saying "what's up"?

Ed began to talk but Gene interrupted and said, "wait a minute, let me check this out before you start explaining it. You want a beer?"

"No, a little too early for me."

Gene kept looking at the paperwork figuring out more about how Ed thinks and works then the actual tasks laid out before him. Ed says, "let me take you.." Gene interrupts again, "no, let me see how you did this and then you can point out all the stuff I miss. You started with the yellow pad. You began writing down all the crap in your head so you could kind of look at it all and then get organized into different lists. The initial before each one puts it in a category. I understand this and this, what's M?"

"Marketing."

"Of course. Then you made a separate yellow sheet for each category. You even put a check mark at the end of each item on the first sheet as you posted it to the next sheet. On those second sheets you left more room for each item so you could add details. Ok, what is the check mark for at the end of each item on these sheets?"

Ed, sheepishly smiling said, "that's when I posted it to the calendar."

"Damn dude. I take it you didn't watch that movie last night."

"Well, no, I didn't get to that. Ok, look at the calendar, what do you notice?"

"There's a bunch of shit on there."

"Yeah, anything else?"

"Colors. Some are written in red and some are in blue. What's that, priority?"

"No, quarterback. You're blue."

"Well my first impression is that I'm glad I'm not red."

"Yeah, that's me."

"Look if you are on some mission to impress me, huh, you did that 5 days ago. This is insane, A good insane, no a great insane but still insane. I don't even want to look at the red, those are your nightmares, let me understand some of my blues. TV installation, ok. Cappuccino, ok. What's telephone?"

Ed explains, "We've got one line coming in. We need at least 2 more with the ability to add more when needed. We want to promote only the line we have with all calls tripping to the other lines automatically. We need two more phones with multiple buttons, one at the bar and one in the kitchen. We might need to get a third in the kitchen. Actually, no, we need a third one in the kitchen right away."

"I can do that on Monday, what's sports?"

"A couple things. Check with the cable guy about our package. It might be expensive, but we need good sports coverage. We're comin' up onto football. We need Kansas City and Kansas state coverage."

"We need St. Louis too. Lots of fans." Gene added.

"Ok, talk to the guy find out what we need and what it costs for the different packages. Don't forget baseball. Regular channels cover NCAA basketball. Research it and we'll talk about what makes the most sense. Next, I want you to shop for some sports paraphernalia. I don't think we need collectables but banners, maybe a jersey, framed picture of the stadium, Cheerleaders, team photos, did I mention cheerleaders?" Ed said smiling.

"Yeah, you did, I got it. I need to figure out where to hang all this stuff."

"Yeah, but Leslie will be back to help us with that. The next one is to get with your beer guy and see what he has that's sports oriented. You've got two beer guys, right?"

"Yeah, one's beer and one is beer and wine."

"They see what we're doing. They know we are going to be pouring a lot more than we have been. Play them against each other if necessary but get some free stuff. The last one might involve them too. We need card size, maybe a little bigger, football schedules. We need one for St. Louis, one for Kansas City with the college schedule on the back. We want our name and phone number on each. If the beer guys can't do that then we might have to print them up ourselves. See what you can get."

"You know when you break it down like this, it's not that hard. I can do all this stuff. Just glancing at your list makes my head swim."

"Don't worry, there's more blue stuff coming. Ok, we've got customers let's get to work."

Sunday went well. Sales were up about 18% from usual. Near the end Ed had another meeting with everyone. Tomorrow is a big day. Everyone looked a little puzzled knowing they were closed. Ed continued. "We've got a contractor here tomorrow to hook up three big screen TVs in the bar and prepare for the cappuccino machine installation and the pizza conveyor installation that will be taking place later in the week." Everybody was smiling. "Then the big one we are hooking up our new computer system that you will need to learn to use".

Some of the smiles went away, most notably Gene's.

Ed then stated confidently, "Don't be afraid it's easy. Not only is it easy it will make everyone's life easier at doing their jobs. It will be easier to give all of you hands on training once the system is in place, but let me tell you some of the stuff it does. You will all be given a number. That's how you punch in and out for work. You will enter your number and then place all orders on the computer screen. Everything will be on the screen ready for you to hit and go. There will be a small printer at the bar, the pizza station, the stove station, drink station and the salad station. When you place your order the computer automatically, near magically sends the info to these printers that generate a slip for the cook or bartender. They make what you need and put it up for you with the slip. No

more dupes that you can't read or little slips of paper or screaming at Gene that you need the draft not the bottle. It eliminates tons of mistakes. Once you've worked it for a day or two you'll wonder how you ever got along without it."

Some of the faces looked worried.

Ed said, "hey, some changes are good. This is one of them. While we are on the subject of change let me give you some of the highlights of what is going to be happening over the next month. The whole place is getting a facelift. The lounge is going to become a sports bar with all the appropriate décor. We're going to darken up this room a little and give it a friendly Italian look. We're painting the outside of the building and putting in a big landscape island in front of the entrance. Over the next 10 days or so Harry and I will be completing the new menu with lots of tasty options. We will begin a marketing campaign in a couple weeks placing emphasis on pick-up and delivery. We will have a grand opening in about a month. There will be more little details along the way. One not so little detail is that we will start opening on Monday shooting for the football crowd. Over the next month I will need to staff up. I am open for recommendations. Let me tell you what I'm looking for. They all need to be clean cut, hardworking, quick thinking, loyal and dependable. If you want to know what that looks like then look at each other, because that is what you all are. I want more people just like you. So, hang in there with us and watch the change. I think you'll enjoy it. We have a new name that we think is in keeping with what's going on. The Rusty Bucket is becoming The Shiny Bucket."

Everyone smiled and even laughed as they got up to finish their tasks. Ed asked Donnie to stay behind.

He sat down a little nervous. He thought his work had been good.

Ed asked, "how much work do you want?"

"As much as I can get."

"Do you know how to paint?"

"I always did good in wood shop. I painted my sister's apartment for her. Yeah, I paint good."

"Look I'm going to keep you bussing and dishwashing on weekends. We'll see how weekday sales go, we might need some help there. But I've got two other things to talk to you about. First is painting. Actually, it is more than painting. It's cleaning, landscaping and a bunch of other stuff. Most of that will be done either before or after the restaurant is open. I'll take you up a buck an hour for that."

"Sure, sounds great. I can work anytime you want." Donnie said energetically.

"Good, second, once we get into full swing, I want to move you up to server. I assume you have noticed the difference in money made between you and your sister."

"Oh yeah. That would be great."

"You just keep doing a good job and good things are going to happen for you."

"Thanks, great, just tell me when you need me."

Gene had been standing off to the side listening. He came over. "You're a cheerleader too. Your meeting was great. I don't think they're afraid of the computers like I am."

"Well, they're younger."

"Yeah. That thing you did with Donnie was smart. He'd charge a machine gun nest for you."

"Yeah, as long as I deliver."

"You'll deliver. Look I won't bug you for a story tonight but how about if we get together at 9:00 tomorrow. Others aren't showing up until 10:00. In the meantime, I've got blue things to think about. Let's go home."

"See you in the morning."

"Morning partner. Want a coffee? I just put on a fresh pot."

"Sure, sounds good. I put together a list of Blue calls to make."

"Cool. Hey watch this. I'm going to start a story before you start begging."

"That would be refreshing. We ended with staring at Gramma Sarah's boobies."

Ed said, "You have no shame. Yes, they were on a blanket in the shade enjoying each other with his horse Poli standing by. As time went on, they began talking to each other. The first question that came up was when?"

Foster half-jokingly suggested that afternoon.

Sarah smiled and said, "that would be nice but I'm going to need at least a week."

Foster was thrilled. "He thought he was going to have to wait months." He quietly agreed to her timetable. Now the plans began. She wanted to get married in her church. Fine. She wanted to invite Aunt Helen and a couple friends Foster hadn't met yet. Fine. Foster wanted to invite his work crew and his landlady. Fine. No tuxedos just nice fancy clothes. Sarah already had a wedding dress worn by her mother. Aunt Helen would freshen it up. Fine.

Foster then asked about a honeymoon.

"Are you sure you want to spend the money? Just having you in a bed is all the honeymoon I need."

"I'm only getting married once. You get me for life. I think a honeymoon is in order."

"That sounds wonderful. Plan whatever you want. I'll be there."

They went back home to tell Aunt Helen. Foster was a little nervous as to how she would react.

When she got the word she jumped out of her chair and ran to Sarah and hugged her. She then turned to Foster and said "You've got a good woman here. You treat her right."

"I will. I promise."

Helen opened a bottle of wine again and organized a toast.

They talked plans and finally settled on two weeks not one. Foster could wait, although he still liked the idea of this afternoon. The ladies kept planning things that meant nothing to Foster. Sarah shared with Helen that Foster

was in charge of the honeymoon.

Sarah had to leave the room, so Aunt Helen moved over to a chair next to Foster and said, "I've got a great idea for the honeymoon."

"Please tell me. I'm kind of at a loss." Foster said sincerely.

"Niagara Falls. It's beautiful and a short day's ride from here. I know the perfect place. If you want I'll send a letter and make a reservation for you."

"Great."

"How long do you want to stay?" Helen asked.

"Well, if we go over on Sunday and stay through Thursday morning and then ride home, I think that would be good."

"Stay the week. I'll pay for the room as my wedding gift."

"Really. Are you sure? That sounds expensive." Foster was excited but wondered is it ok for someone to give such an expensive gift.

"Sarah is the only one I've got. I would be honored. Sarah's always wanted to go to Niagara Falls since she got here. We never got around to it. This will be better. Keep it as a surprise."

"Sure, thank you Aunt Helen. You are so kind."

When Sarah came back in the room Helen and Foster were trying to swallow their smiles.

Foster and Sarah decided to go to the church and make arrangements with the Pastor. On the way back it hit them that they are really doing this. They were both so happy.

On Monday morning after watching his sunrise Foster went off to work. He told everyone the news and invited them to attend. He added that they will be having champagne afterwards at Chumly's restaurant. He then walked over to Luke.

"Luke, I have two favors to ask. First, I want the week off after my wedding to go on a honeymoon. And second, we are going to Niagara Falls, so I need a carriage. Do you know where I can rent one?"

"You've always been a good worker and this is certainly a special occasion so yes you can have the week off. Second, I have a carriage you can borrow for the week. Can Poli pull it?"

"I asked Thomas when we were there. He said sure. It might be a good idea to hook her up once and try it out. Hanging on to a runaway horse and carriage is probably not a great way to start things out."

Come by the stable one night after work and we'll try her out."

"Thanks."

"Where are you spending your wedding night?"

“At the Ashly Hotel.”

Luke said, “Alright. I’ll have Poli and carriage waiting at Chumly’s to take you to the hotel. Then Sunday morning I’ll have her back for you to take your trip to Niagara Falls.”

“Wow, that would be so great Luke. Thank you.”

Over the next 11 days Foster and Sarah got together 6 times. 4 evenings where they found their bench. On both days of the weekend, they went back to their special place where he asked her to wed. The privacy of that spot gave them the opportunity to more enjoy each other. It was delightful to the point of pain. They went further than they had before while still protecting the mystery of the wedding night. They were both so ready to marry.

The wedding day came with minimal fanfare. There was no bride’s maid or best man. The bride and groom walked down the aisle together. There were 15 people gathered in the pews. Vows were exchanged a pronouncement made and a kiss delivered with applause. They paused for a moment at the back of the church and thanked the Pastor. Everyone walked down the block to Chumly’s where champagne was waiting. Luke gave a toast as did Aunt Helen. The party continued for about 45 minutes. When they left the restaurant Sarah and Foster saw the carriage dressed with ribbons, flowers and a “JUST MARRIED” sign. Even Poli had a bow and flower. Sarah threw her bouquet that was caught by one of her friends. They started down the 20 blocks to the hotel. All along the way people were waving, clapping and yelling congratulations. It really was special.

When they got to the hotel Foster told the man in charge of livery that Luke would be by in a short while to pick up the carriage and return with it the next morning. Foster and Sarah went to the desk to get their key and pay for the room. They were told that the room was paid for by two men who work with you sir. Yet another surprise. A man was carrying their luggage.

Foster asked, “do you want to get some dinner before we go up?”

Sarah whispered, “I’m a little hungry. Once I get you in that room, I’m not letting you go until tomorrow.”

Foster smiled and said, “I think a quick little dinner sounds good.” The bellman took up the luggage. After dinner, no dessert or coffee, they quietly moved on to their room.

The mystery was worth waiting for. Foster was not a man of experience in these areas. He was of the impression that this thing one did only once. With delight he found out he was mistaken. The next morning came, and it was time to pack up and go. Sarah still didn’t know where they were going. They came downstairs and saw Luke waiting with Poli hooked up to the carriage, “Alright I’ve been good and waited without asking. Where are we going?”

“Niagara Falls.”

“Really!? I’ve always wanted to go there.”

“So Aunt Helen said. She not only made the hotel reservations, but she paid for the week stay.”

“She has always been so good to me. My God. How long do you think the ride is?”

“About six hours. We’re stopping for lunch along the way.”

They climbed aboard the carriage, waved goodbye to Luke and started along the way. They never got tired of

talking to each other. Sometimes they kidded about their athleticism of last night, other times they pointed out things of interest and still other times they talked about life on the prairie.

Foster's dad always said that you shouldn't love an animal. They're there to serve you. Well Foster has had Poli out for a ride almost every day since he bought her. It might not be love but it is certainly close. With Sarah it was total. She loved that horse. She would come to the stable and give Poli an apple. She would stoke her and even talk to her. She was in love, twice.

When they stopped for lunch Foster made sure Poli got shade food and water. Lunch was nice. They were on the river and could see land across the way. They asked the waitress if that was Canada.

No, she said, "that's Grand Island. The biggest Island in the world surrounded by fresh water. The Niagara River splits and goes on either side of it." They also found out it was about another 2 and a half hours to where they were going. The waitress knew the name of the hotel they were staying at and said, "it's really nice they just fixed it all up and expanded it."

CHAPTER 9 THE HONEYMOON THE PLUMBING

After lunch they got back on and began heading North. When they got to the hotel, they couldn't believe their eyes. It was beautiful. It was all brick and had a full overhang big enough for two carriages. Two men walked up and greeted them. Foster told them that he needed to go to the desk to check in, unload luggage and take Poli and carriage to the stable.

One man said "I'll take care of your luggage sir." The other said "I'll take care of your horse and carriage."

Foster mildly protested and said he really wanted to make sure that Poli was well taken care of.

The man replied, "We get the fanciest people and the fanciest horses in the world here. Believe me your horse will be treated well. Once you get settled come down and see her. I think you will be pleasantly surprised."

Foster agreed, put Sarah on his arm and walked into the lobby.

Again, everything was beautiful. Marble floors, mahogany desk and two big chandeliers. Wow. Sarah couldn't even talk.

They walked to the desk and gave the name. Sarah was thrilled to be called, Mister and misses.

The desk clerk welcomed them, looked at her book and said "oh newlyweds. How nice. We have the honeymoon suite for you. I think you'll love it. When you get there, you will find fresh fruit, meats and cheeses and a loaf of fresh bread. There is also the bottle of wine you ordered."

Foster and Sarah looked at each other and said together, "Aunt Helen."

The clerk continued saying "we have a lovely restaurant here, then quietly added, it's a little pricey." She mentioned three other restaurants and what they specialized in. She gave them a map of the points of interest. Then she gave them a piece of paper and said "this entitles you to have your picture taken down by the falls."

Foster took in all the information, while Sarah stood there frozen like a deer. It was all so overwhelming. They got their key and followed the bellman to their room. When he opened the door the amazement continued. The room was huge and beautiful. There was a fireplace with a sofa right in front of it. The bed was enormous. Foster

thought to himself, I'll need less than half of that. There was a side table with two chairs by the window. On it sat the food tray, bottle of wine and two fancy wine glasses. The window wasn't really a window, it was a glass door that opened onto a small patio with two more chairs and a small table. The view was spectacular. You could see the mist from the falls. The bellman continued his tour by showing the couple the bathroom. They had their own bathtub with running water. The bellman pointed out that the faucet on the left was for hot water. You have to run in for a couple seconds before the water gets hot, he apologized. He then stepped over to this porcelain fixture and pulled the chain on top saying this is your water closet. The gentle woosh noise startled Sarah and fascinated Foster.

"Where does it go?", Foster asked.

"You'd be surprised how many people ask that. It drains to a huge tank we have buried out back. A man comes twice a week to empty it." Sarah and Foster looked on in disbelief, Sarah for how beautiful it was and Foster knowing that he was going to figure out how to build this room.

The bellman asked if they want him to open the wine, they both nodded. Luke and Aunt Helen had both taken Foster through the etiquette of tipping. Foster pulled out the appropriate amount from his pocket paid the bellman who then said goodbye. On his way out he then said if you need anything just ask for James.

The newlyweds looked at each other like they had just been transported to a magical fantasy land. They embraced. Foster poured them each a glass of wine as Sarah began undressing. Foster thought that he would never get tired of watching that. Sarah went to the bathroom, as it is called, to wash up a little. Foster could hear the water running. He wanted to go and see how the pipes worked when he decided that there would be time for that later. She emerged wearing the gown she had worn the night before looking beautiful. They plunged into bed. They made love twice in between each they ate the meat, cheese and fruit that had been prepared. Sarah then said "we have a couple hours of sunlight left, let's go see the falls."

They got up, got dressed and went outside. You didn't need directions because you could hear the roar of the water. It grew louder as they got closer. The mist became more noticeable and could finally be felt falling on their faces as they reached the water's edge.

What a sight. There was nothing to say other than oh my God. They stood for a few moments and then moved on to a different spot to see it from a different perspective. You could tell where to go. It was where other people had gathered to look. Some spots offered a better view than others but all of them were outstanding. Once they had seen all the popular places to stare, they went back to about 100 yards before the falls to look at the rapids and then worked their way down to the edge of the falls and beyond to where you could see the water hit the river waiting below. Wow.

Sarah was amazed at how close you could walk. There was a taught rope fence for about 100 yards on either side of the falls but other than that you could walk right up and stare over. It was scary, but exciting.

Foster saw the man packing up his camera. They went over and introduced themselves. He asked if they were leaving town. Foster said no, they had just gotten in. "Great, I've lost the light for today. I'm here all the time. Come by anytime you want but the best light is between 12:00 and 3:00."

Foster could see that the sun was setting. He looked around and determined that there wasn't a place to stand and watch the sun hit the water. Then he saw that it didn't matter. As the falling sun's rays hit the mist it exploded with color. They could see two different rainbows at the same time. Just amazing. They stayed frozen in

one spot until the sun had dropped fully from the sky. Even then the view was fascinating in the dull light of dusk. Even after darkness took over the sky you could still see some of the water and you could hear it. It sounded like it got louder after you could see less.

Although they were not tired of the view they decided to move on. They could see the lights and hear the sounds of the promenade. It looked like the fair except the booths were buildings. You could tell they catered to people on holiday. They walked through all the shops. Both were amazed at how they figured out how to write "Niagara Falls" on everything. Many had hand painted drawings of the falls itself. They saw a set of 4 teacups and pot that had all of that. Foster said to Sarah, "we have to buy that before we leave to give to Aunt Helen."

"Oh, she'll love that."

They really weren't hungry after their late afternoon heavy snack at the room. They did buy another doughnut. They continued to walk around. They went into a picture gallery. These weren't paintings but photographs. The same man owned it they saw with the camera earlier in the day. They looked at all the photos. They were particularly drawn to the ones that captured the rainbows. One wall of the shop was covered with photos taken in winter.

Sarah said, "look at how icy the ground is."

"Yeah, all that mist freezing when it hits. Can you imagine how slippery that must be?"

"I'm scared walking by the falls when there is no ice. People must fall and slide right in."

Foster then noticed some photos taken from the other side of the river. He asked the clerk how they do that.

"Well, Mr. Warner goes upriver about 2 miles and catches a boat that takes him to the other side. He then comes back to the falls and takes his pictures all day and then comes back."

"Wow it looks so different from over there. That's gorgeous. The water seems deeper when it goes over the falls then it does on this side."

The clerk added, "Yes it is. You can get a better view if you go to Goat Island."

"Where?"

"Goat Island. It's the land in between the American Falls and the Canadian Falls. They built a walking bridge last year that lets you go over there. It's really nice."

"That sounds scary and dangerous." Sarah said.

"Scary yes, dangerous not so much. We have hundreds of people walk it every day. We've only lost one and people said he jumped."

Foster said, "We've got to do that."

Sarah said, "I hope you mean walk over not jump." She smiled and nodded. On the way back to the hotel they made two more stops. One to buy a bottle of wine and the other to buy an apple.

At the hotel they walked by the entrance and went to the stable to see Poli. The first thing they noticed was outside the barn. There all lined up were about 15 carriages all with name tags. They saw theirs. Then they

walked in the barn. It was the biggest cleanest barn they had ever seen. The stableman came up and asked if he could be of service.

"We're just checking on our horse Poli."

"Oh, she is doing fine sir. We gave her a nice walk to cool her down then fed her and gave her fresh water. She's happy."

When they walked over to her stall they found that she looked happy indeed. When she saw Sarah, she began to whinny. She knew Sarah typically had a treat. While Sarah was spoiling Poli Foster talked with the stableman.

"I might want to take my horse out for a run tomorrow. We came by carriage. Do you have a saddle I can borrow?"

Certainly sir. Just give me about 10 minutes notice and I'll have her saddled up and brought around front. Same thing if you want to use your carriage. That takes a little longer. I know the best trails and pastures to ride. With some directions they are easy to find. I recommend you keep her away from the falls. There are too many people, the noise sometimes spooks the horse and you have to clean up after her should she do her business. Tourists, you know."

"That's fine." Foster took some money out of his pocket for the stableman. Luke hadn't mentioned tipping here, but it sure looked like it made sense. He's taking great care of Poli and he wanted that to continue.

They said goodnight and went back to their hotel room to enjoy each other until they fell off to sleep exhausted.

CHAPTER 10 COMPUTERS, CAPPACINO MACHINES, PIZZA CONVEYERS AND MICRO BREWS

"OK that's enough story telling for today." Ed said, "We've got lots of work to do today."

"Alright, but that's not all of the Falls is it. I've been to Niagara Falls and it's beautiful. I never imagined what it must have looked like back then." Pauly and his guys just pulled up. After a few quick hellos they went right to work. One guy who was focused on electrical hooked up with Ed and began discussing the placement of equipment that needed to be installed. Two guys worked with Gene on where the TVs and controls would go. One of those guys, Warren, looked at where the coffee machine was going to go and where the existing plumbing was. Warren was a planning guy as well as a worker guy. Later on he focused on the bathrooms to see what plumbing and carpentry work were going to be needed. It was all moving along at quite a clip with Ed and Gene actually not doing much except watching and answering questions. Gene had gone through his phone calls and had scheduled visits with the two beer vendors, tv dish guy and phone guy. They were all coming later today.

With the beer guys Gene played one off against the other. "After I get both proposals, I'll tell both of you what the other guy is offering. Right now, I want you to give it your best shot. One thing you might want to think about is that we are going to need a new sign with our new name. Key words on everything are, Shiny Bucket, Open under new management, gourmet pizzas and pastas, dine in, pickup and delivery, sports bar, big screen TVs, micro brews on tap, football specials. That's about it."

Gene noticed that Brian hadn't written down the key words. Gene thought to himself, this is one of the no note

takers. I think he milked this guy for all he could. Ed excused himself to go back to the kitchen.

It was all moving along quite nicely. It was a three-ring circus with computer/printer stuff going on, while TVs were being installed and final measurements being taken for both bathrooms and the front entrance. Harry and Donnie showed up. They knew they weren't working but they also knew major things were happening. They wanted to check it out and see if they could help. As they looked around you could tell they were amazed.

Ed asked Donnie; "hey can you type?"

"Come on, I'm a computer kid, of course I can type. I'm on it," Donnie said. Before Ed could return Donnie had already moved on to liquor and entered that data as well. Ed looked over at Harry and said, let's talk menu. Ed said, "you had some ideas, let's hear them."

Harry wanted to look confident when he presented his ideas. He felt better knowing that Ed was a nice guy who seemed to like him. He began, "Well some are simple, but I think important. Can we quit serving these crappy meatballs and sausage? I can make a great meatball and good fresh sausages are available for almost the same price that we are paying for frozen junk."

Ed quickly said yes but added I want to try your meatballs before they go to our customers. Both nodded as Harry continued,

"I think we need a white sauce and a garlic, lemon wine sauce. With that you can serve a fettuccini Alfredo for one price and add either chicken or shrimp for a different price. Same thing with the garlic sauce. Now you would have three great homemade sauces with meat/fish/vegetables served over choices of pasta. You can work with pre cleaned frozen shrimp that only take a couple minutes to sauté."

"Keep going," Ed said.

"If we are becoming an Italian restaurant then I think we need an antipasto. That would give us three salads. I think we need a small and large of each, especially if we are doing delivery. We need to think through prices on all our salads and standardize what goes in them. I think we need to upgrade the salad station to include all the items we use and keep everything chilled to the right temperature. I've collected menus from all the Italian restaurants and fast foods, so I know what they serve and what they charge."

Ed was impressed. He had thought about most of the items that Harry had mentioned but the garlic sauce is a great idea, as is standardizing and modernizing the salad station. Having the other menus was a bonus. Ed added, "Your ideas are great. I'm looking forward to a tasting. We always need to consider inventory control specifically noting temperature. I figure meatballs and sausages are good for a couple days in the cooler. Shrimp in the freezer is no problem. Veggies we need to buy all the time. I also want to offer one-night specials like stuffed shells or chicken cacciatore."

Harry was beaming that his ideas worked for the boss and that he was invited to meet with the suppliers. Ed said, "write up what you just told me. Nothing fancy, just put down the facts. Go over our current menu and think through what you want to keep and what you want to get rid of. Add in your new dishes and get a list to Donnie so he can start entering it into the computer."

The contractors were finishing up on hanging TVs looking forward to some plumbing work for the coffee machine, Brian was running cables to printers, the electrician was doing whatever electricians do to make the system ready to take on new equipment and Gene was finishing up roasting the beer guy. Ed met the phone guy, actually a girl

named Lisa and invited her into the dining room for a chat.

As they sat down, she said, "wow, things are popping around here."

Ed answered, "Yeah the scary part is that it all seems to be going along well. I keep waiting for something bad to happen."

"Well hopefully that's not me. I know what you've got which is close to nothing, what do you need?"

Ed went through that he wanted to keep his primary number with additional lines receiving the excess. He explained the operation complete with the hopes for a delivery business. He suggested the placement of phones.

She took good notes. She smiled and said, "I think we can set this up where we can grow with your needs almost instantly as they present themselves. I think we should start with three lines and three new phones. We also need to change out the phones behind the bar and in the back office to the new models. I will flag your system to be monitored daily for a while. We will know not only how many busy signals you generated but also how many calls went to four rings before you answered. The first is a line problem, the second is staffing. I can add a line in a day. I can add a new phone in a day. When, not if but when you want to go to internet/web page ordering we are ready for that as well."

"I think the web is down the road a piece."

"I know but it is coming, and we are ready when it does."

Ed said. "I like everything you just said and how you said it. Price is important. You know I'm calling your competitor and taking him through the same story. I want a proposal that shows up front and ongoing costs. I need to know when you can have it installed."

"I'll have the proposal by noon tomorrow. If you say yes, I can have you up and running by the weekend."

Ed said with authority. "All you need now is a hot price. See you tomorrow."

Lisa said thank you and left.

Ed looked at Gene and said "People jump when you're the guy spending money. Speaking of money, Bad news, good news. We need a new cash register that talks to our new computer system. New out of the box they're about \$2,300. Ed could see the grimace on Gene's face, the good news is that Brian's got a guy with a used one for \$450. I need your approval."

Gene said yes then said, "The tv dish guy said we've got two choices. One is a bunch of stuff for about \$150 a month and the other is all the stuff for about \$320. The big difference is football and baseball coverage".

Ed said. "We could start little and work our way up or we can go big."

Gene came back with, "Shit, we're spending all this money to make a sports bar, I think we need to be a sports bar. I vote go big".

Done. Ed reported the progress with computers, printers and phone proposal. He then added. Harry and Donnie are working out great. They came in on their day off with lots of good ideas and work. He then took him through Harry's menu ideas and Donnie's skill on the computer. I've got the other phone guy coming in yet. We need to

think over that wine and liquor order. We need to price everything out before we put it in the computer.”

Gene asked for a meeting when Ed paused and spoke. “You had your story today.” “I know I’m talking about a real business meeting. “Yeah, I’ve got to make some decisions on food pricing. Call your liquor distributor back and ask for competitive pricing on the new products we are thinking about as well as our current price list. Harry has collected about nine menus from all over the county. I’ll look over mine and you look over yours let’s make lists of new recommended prices and talk about it when the dust settles around here. By the way don’t worry about the computer. We can change prices at will.”

“I wish I wasn’t worried about the computer.”

“Relax, you’re going to do fine.” They finished their beer and went back to work.

When Ed got back in the kitchen, he could tell that Donnie had some questions. “What’s up?”

Donnie said. “I’ve got all the bar prices in. I separated draft from bottles on the beer. On the liquor is this just for pricing or is it for ordering like with the food?”

“Both”

“Ok, about the pastas Harry gave me a list.” He goes to pasta. All in.

Donnie goes to the pizza screen. The toppings appear.

“Ok, I can do that. Once you decide on prices and show me how to add price for one or two, I can enter all the data for the rest. I can check each one out to make sure you get the price that matches all the boxes that you hit. This is a cool system. How do you know how to work it?”

“This was my brother’s old system. I worked it for 3 years.

“You need to know this. When a pickup or delivery order comes in you first enter phone number. That opens this screen where you enter name, address and closest street intersection. You then go to the order screen and make your order. The next time that customer calls in you enter the phone number and his file comes up with address and all. You also know what he ordered and when. The names and addresses go into a data base so if we want to send a mailer or coupon, we can print them out.”

“Damn”.

Ed looked at Donnie and said “Yeah, this is going to change a lot around here.”{

He went over to the stove where Harry was making meatballs and a couple sauces. Ed asked, “have you got time to make three pizzas? We’ve got dough balls in there. Let’s feed these guys.” Harry nodded with a smile and then said, “What kind boss?”

“Surprise me. How long on those meat balls?”

Harry then said with a little pride, “They’re almost done. You want me to put them out for a taste test with these guys?”

“If you can do it that would be great.”

"Got it."

Ed said let me get Gene in here. He called Gene in. He motioned for Harry to come over as well. The question is do we keep the old ovens? There's room for the conveyor if we keep it but it would be placed differently. Both ways work. It does take up space.

Gene looked at Harry and asked, what do we use it for other than pizzas?"

"Well, I toast my sandwiches in it for lunch, but that's about it. Does the conveyor do garlic bread?"

Ed said, " yeah beautifully. It also has a door halfway down that would allow you to toast your sandwiches."

"Plus, that sucker gobbles energy. If we've got the conveyor going anyway, I don't think we need to be feeding gas to both."

Gene says, "Harry that's a brilliant answer. The problem is that we need the second one going before we lose the first. Can we do that?"

Ed said, "The electrician said that the new oven is easy to hook up now that I got everything prepped to go. If you know 100% sure know that the conveyor will be here Thursday morning, I can get the old one disconnected and pulled and the new one in, in about two hours. You need two things. Total confidence that it will be here and a couple strong guys to lift that mother out of here. It's heavy, and I don't do that kind of stuff anymore. I bet it weighs almost 300 pounds. It would be good if you had a sturdy cart. I bet you're going to have to flip it to get it through the door."

Harry said "We'll not flip it, we need to turn it on its side. I've got a heavy-duty cart at home that would work if I can borrow Ed's truck to bring it in."

"No problem. I'm calling the conveyor people right now. But I'm for moving it out."

Gene agreed.

Harry said, "If we get Donnie, Ed and myself I think we can muscle it ok."

Gene noticed he was put in the old guy category when it came to heavy lifting. He thought I'm alright with that.

Ed came back and said the conveyor would be delivered Wednesday afternoon. It comes in 5 boxes the biggest of which is four-foot square. The heaviest of which is 80 pounds. He said he could drop it off after work on Wednesday and come back Thursday morning to hook it up. He brings all his own tools, but he needs some help in lifting the heavy part into place. Knowing that I think we should yank out the old after work on Wednesday.

Gene asked, "Wont she still be hot?"

"It takes about an hour to cool down to where it can be handled. It takes us that long to clean up. Let's do it. Do we need to cap the gas?"

Gene added. "No there's a shut off valve. Ok I'll be here Thursday morning at 9:00 to make sure he has everything he needs for the installation."

"Sounds great."

The pizzas were coming out to feed the troops. Everybody was happy about that. Not only were they hungry but for the last 10 minutes they have smelled them cooking. Pauly had come by just in time to eat. Actually, he was checking on his guys. Gene asked if it was ok to give the guys some beer. Pual said ok, just don't go to strong, but a beer with lunch is ok. Everybody sat down and silence filled the room. It's amazing how quiet it gets when the food first arrives. People began talking about how good it was when Harry came out with 20 freshly made meatballs. This is hopefully a new item Harry said. "There's enough for two apiece. I really want to know what you think. Truthfully guys, this is important. Would you order these with a pasta or on a hoagie?"

Construction men are not shy when it comes to free food. They jumped in immediately. Their reaction was perfect. They love them. They even kidded Gene about the crap he had been serving. Gene poured another pitcher of beer. Just then a man came to the door carrying a cash register. Gene went for his checkbook. The conversation was all about how great everything looked with the new TVs. Just then through the magic of science some person in a room far away hit some buttons and the TVs changed from test pattern to the coverage of a tennis match. Everybody cheered.

"Damn, look how clear they are, you can see the blades of grass." Gene said as he went to the remote and started flipping through the channels. Pauli showed him how to hit the info button and a scroll of all that was on appeared.

One of the construction guys said, "Damn you get a lot of channels. What a great place to watch a game."

All of it was music to Ed and Gene's ears.

Brian was running his tests on printers. He had hooked up the register and checked to make sure it was working ok. Donnie was still pumping data into the computer. Harry was cleaning up in the kitchen. Gene and Ed were looking at each other trying to figure out what they needed to do. The work that was left wasn't as exciting as the last 6 hours but needed to be done anyway. There were some pricing decisions that had to be made before Ed could enter them into the computer and Gene needed a computer class. They tackled prices first. They started with food. They invited Harry over to be part of the discussion.

After they finished the food part, they suggested that Harry go home and enjoy the rest of his day off. Stan had finished everything and said goodbye after reminding Ed that he was available for questions should he get stuck. The coffee machine was plumbed and ready to be installed. The only ones left were Gene and Ed.

They finished up on the menu items with costing and pricing. The doors were locked so Ed said, "let's go back to my office so we can sit down and I can make you a computer wizard."

"I'm gonna need another beer for this. He poured them both a pint and moved back into the kitchen. This is a nice little set up you've got here. I noticed the calendar is up on the wall. Hey, you haven't checked off all the shit we did today."

Ed said, "I know, I will. Now look this is so easy that I've taught people a whole bunch dumber than you how to be an ace at this. You always start by entering your employee number. Yours is easy, it's 001." For the next hour and one more beer Ed took Gene through everything a server would need to know to take care of a dine in, pick up or delivery customer. Each time he placed an order Ed would run to the various printers and show him what was generated. He stumbled a little on the half and half pizza but got it all down pretty good. He then said this is the same thing you do at the bar. He ran a couple sample bar orders. He showed him that you leave the bill at the bar for each customer until he is ready to check out. Now if he orders a second drink you pick up the slip, after

entering your employee number you put in the slip number and that bill automatically comes up on the screen. Add a drink print and set the bill down in front of the customer again. Then he took him through the pay procedure. Again, after a couple orders he had it down.

"Now I need to show you how to cash out someone else's check, like a waitress." Ed went through it a couple times. After all his early complaining he had it down pat. Gene was quite happy with himself.

Ed explained, that's enough for now. You can do everything you need to do tomorrow. Me on the other hand have all the price input to take care of. Ellen is on tomorrow; I need to call her and have her come in a little early to learn the system."

"I can call Ellen; you've got work to do. Besides, I'm going in the other room and watch a tv or two. Catch you later."

When Gene returned he said, "Well, I've never done that before. I just watched two movies at the same time, plus when one had a good car crash, I could go back and watch it again in slow motion. What a country."

Ed smiled and then said, "we had a big day today. We spent a lot of money and didn't make a dime."

Gene added, "We made more than money today. You know buying stuff, fixing stuff and installing stuff leads to progress. What I was impressed with is how Harry and Donnie showed up and kicked in. You know we have to pay them for today."

"Yeah, but not just hours on their check. Let's figure out something we can do for them. I don't know maybe football tickets or maybe a concert."

"Yeah, something other than money. Hey how about we get them a gift certificate for dinner at your brother's.?"

"Yeah, something like that. Tomorrow we've got the coffee machine coming. More new skills to master." Gene grumbled. "Hey, if I can figure out that computer, I can certainly learn how to make an espresso."

"Great attitude sir. I've got to switch back into regular work mode." Ed was quietly talking to himself, *"Worked up my shopping list. I'm adding ground beef. Harry is hot to trot to serve his new meatballs. It's all so cool? God what a day."*

Then to Gene he says "Well tomorrow is another one. By the way I think you're going to like the morning story."

"Sounds good to me."

They left the shop.

CHAPTER 11 GOAT ISLAND FLUSH TOILET – NEW LOOK, NEW MENU, NEW STAFF

At 9:30 Ed showed up with only 4 bags of groceries. Gene was pouring him a coffee while he unloaded.

"Mornin' partner. How much do you have to fire up before I can hear the next installment about your family?"

Ed smiled and nodded thanks for the coffee. "I've got dough to make but other than that I think I'm ready. Give me a half hour."

"Cool, I need about the same to get the bar stocked."

Ed grabbed his second cup of coffee and went out to the bar. Gene was smiling like a grandkid knowing "story time" was coming.

"Ok, they're on their honeymoon in Niagara Falls. I left out many of the descriptions because I thought you'd get too excited." Ed smiled.

Gene looked over and said, "Yeah, yeah just tell me the story."

Ed began. After an industrious evening Sarah fell off into a deep sleep. Foster had been waiting for such a moment. He really wanted to inspect the water closet. At first he was fascinated that hot and cold water were available in his room, but this device he couldn't believe. He had seen one at the fair, but it wasn't hooked up. Before he even flushed it he took the top off the tank to see the inner workings. What amazed him was how simple it was. A handle, lever and valve worked together to make a measured amount of water flood into the bowl, The weight of the new water caused the bowl to empty itself. Then the valve closed and replacement water flowed into the tank until a floating bob hooked to the water supply signaled the supply to stop. So simple, so clever, so amazing. Foster then looked at the water supply pipes. They were copper. Two sets, one for hot water and one for cold. Only the cold went to the water closet. Foster thought that every home he would build in the future would have all of this. In the morning I need to check out where the water comes from and how it is heated and then the big one where it all goes. He had seen everything he could see here, tomorrow he would continue his investigation. He slid back in next to Sarah in bed. He thought of all the years that he went to bed alone and then beamed at all the years yet to come where he would have the smooth comfort of his wife. He fell to sleep quickly.

Foster rose early as he always did. He dressed himself enough to go to the kitchen to get some coffee and sugared biscuits. When he got back Sarah was starting to stir.

"Good morning wife".

"Good morning husband. Did you really get me coffee?"

"And a biscuit."

"You are spoiling me. Don't stop."

"Never. We can do whatever we want today."

"Well that sounds great but I'd kind of like to start my day right here." As she patted the bed.

"Yeah, but knowing you, my coffee would get cold. Let's watch the sunrise".

"Wonderful." She put on this robe that made her look so inviting. They walked to the door that opened to two chairs and a small table outside. This is special. Foster brought the coffee and biscuits and took a seat next to his bride. The sky was starting to lighten. In the quiet of the early morning, you could hear the rush of water over the falls. Peaceful yet exciting. You couldn't see the water, but you could hear it and watch the constant mist it created. Foster could tell that the sun was going to rise on the far-right side of his view. They maneuvered their chairs and table to get the best angle to see. The colors were the same, the clouds reflection of light was the same, even the birds singing was the same the only difference was the sun splashing through the mist. It's another rainbow. I guess it always has a rainbow. It was a rare and special day when you could see a rainbow at home. Here it is as common as looking at a tree. Wow.

After about thirty minutes the full sun was secure in the morning sky. They went back to bed. Coffee breath, kind of nice.

Two hours later it was time to take in the day. Sarah grabbed an apple that was left in their bowl of fruit. Time to see Poli. Poli was happy to see them and especially happy to see the apple. Sarah did her stroking thing that she always did. Foster said, "why don't we go for a ride this afternoon?"

"That sounds great." They walked back into the hotel and went to the front desk.

"How's your stay so far?"

Sarah said "magical."

The clerk then added, "Well it gets better if you can believe that. Do you have morning plans?"

"Not really, just walk around I guess." Foster said.

"Here's what you do. Go see the falls, everybody does, you can't get tired of it. But then go to Goat Island."

"The lady at the photo gallery said the same thing." Sarah said.

Goat Island is wonderful. About a quarter mile upriver there is a man bridge that goes over to the island that sits between the American falls and the Canadian falls. The bridge is safe but a little scary. When you get over there you can see the falls from a whole different view. The very end of the island is Three Sister's Island. It's actually the same island but the name is different. When you sit down there you can look upriver and see the water flow calmly. Right in front of you it turns into the rapids all churning and bubbly and then when you look down river you can see the mist as it goes over the falls. It's really a special spot. By the way you are entitled to a picnic lunch. Just tell us the night before and we will have it waiting for you."

"We're thinking of taking our horse out for a ride this afternoon. Foster said.

"Horseback or carriage?"

"Horseback."

"Do you want another horse? I've got one available".

"No, we'll double ride today."

"Honeymooners."

"We might take you up on that another day. We were thinking of taking a carriage ride later in the week." Foster added.

"Well, you can go by carriage or horses but you need to go see the whirlpool. It's about an hour, nice ride. The river makes this huge bend. It is good to see."

"Sounds good."

Off they went to the falls. It really is amazing. Foster said," you know we've heard of Niagara Falls so we kind of know what to expect. It's more than that but imagine the first Indians walking along hunting and then hearing this

strange noise. And then they come upon this."

Sarah said, "no imagine instead of walking along they were canoeing."

They both laugh.

They stopped at 4 different locations as they headed upriver. Then they came upon the bridge. It looked kind of sturdy. You could see that it moved up and down as people crossed over. Foster asked if she was ready to walk over.

"You better hold me tight."

"I will."

It was bad enough feeling the bridge move as you walked on it, but when you looked down you could see the rapids racing under your feet. They didn't stop on the bridge to take a look. They kept on walking briskly until the bridge firmed up under the supports provided for the last eight feet of the span. They were both happy to be on firm land albeit an island between two raging waters. The first thing you notice is that nobody is there. It was a Monday, so no weekend crowd and the bridge did scare away the weak at heart. The result was having an entire island to themselves. First they walked towards the noise. What a sight. The rapids on the American side were much faster than on the other. The depth of the water falling was much more on the Canadian side. All of it was incredible. They sat at each spot they stopped at. Although the scene didn't change much as you looked on, it took some time to really absorb the beauty before you. They then moved to the place the desk clerk called Three Sister's Island. It didn't look like a separate island merely an extension of Goat Island. At the very end about 2 feet from the water's edge was a flat rock just perfect for sitting and watching. Wow, this was special. As Diane had said you could look upstream and see a big river, not unlike any other big river. As you turned your head the view drastically changed as the waters began to swirl. A further turn and you could see the river drop off the edge, generating this giant cloud of mist. Both of them were so taken by the view that they didn't even speak. Finally, Sarah broke the silence with a "my God."

Foster responded with "of all the pretty spots we've stopped at, this is my favorite."

Sarah nodded. They sat there silently for another half hour. They got up and walked around the whole island one more time stopping at each of the viewpoints. That tour ended at the entrance to the bridge. It wasn't as scary the second time. Still exciting but not as scary. Sarah did let out a sigh of relief when her feet hit solid ground. They walked back to the brink of the falls and saw the photographer. They introduced themselves and gave him their ticket for the photo.

"Oh, honeymooners. I keep telling people that Niagara Falls is the "Honeymoon Capital of the World" Catchy phrase, isn't it?"

Sarah said "I'm a believer."

Jonah the photographer had the spot all picked out for the picture. Not only did it have the falls in the background it also had the best light. On the side he had a table with a mirror, comb and brush. They each spruced up a little and then stood on the X on the ground. He took three pictures. Jonah then gave them a card and said the picture can be picked up anytime tomorrow.

Foster asked, "are you the man that took all the pictures in your gallery."

"Everyone."

Sarah said, "Even the winter shots?"

"Oh winter," he shuttered. "The mist comes down so finely that it instantly freezes when it hits the ground. This whole area here turns into a giant skating arena. I wear special shoes with nails coming out the bottom just to walk here."

"Wow. Tell me about the pictures from over there." He points to Canada.

"It is so pretty over there. I wish everybody could go but it is such a hassle to get there. When I go, I load up all my cameras, lots of film and stay three or four days. It takes a full day to get there and another to return. But it is worth it. There are people actually studying how to build a bridge to get over there."

"Bridge over that!" Sarah exclaimed.

"Well not right here. The narrowest place is just down there".

Sarah said, "Doesn't look too narrow to me."

Foster said, "They'll do it. People are doing things now and building things now that I never thought possible. They'll do it."

They said goodbye as they turned to walk down river towards the Promenade. They stopped for a sandwich for lunch. Foster thought about how expensive things are here. Then he thought about how Aunt Helen paid for the room and how the whole trip is a lot less than he previously expected. After lunch Sarah let out a yawn.

Foster suggested that they go back to the room. She could take a nap and he could do some investigating.

Sarah said, "You want to see how they do that water closet thing."

"Yeah, and the water too. Hot water to each room, amazing."

"A nap sounds good to me, even better if you wake me when you are done." She added an ogle.

"That sounds good to me too."

Later Foster went to the front desk and saw Diane. "Thanks for the advice. Goat Island was great".

"Did your wife handle the crossing of the bridge."

"Yeah, she's a brave woman. I was wondering, I build houses in Buffalo."

"You want to see how the water and sewage work. You are not the first builder to stay here. They are all fascinated by the plumbing"

"Please", he paused, he never heard the word sewage before, but he knew what she was saying.

Diane said, "you are in luck. The man who designed and built all of our plumbing is here today. I'll see if he can give you a tour."

While waiting Foster went over to the gift shop. The gifts here were a little nicer than what you see in the shops on

the promenade, but a lot more expensive.

Diane walked up with a man and introduced them.

William was a tall man, dressed well with a good handshake. Foster could tell he was an educated man.

"So, you want to see how we do it?"

"If I could sir."

"Call me William. I'd be happy to show you around. I'm quite proud of this installation and enjoy showing it to people who know construction." They started with the water supply that was a well. It had a steam pump that pushed the water up into a cistern that was behind the hotel. The cistern was higher than the hotel so gravity carried the water down. The pipes then split with a quarter of the water flowing to a tank that looked like a small cistern, but it sat upon a fire fueled by wood.

"Do you need to keep pumping the water along the way?"

"We have some auxiliary pumps built in, but the system is a big syphon. As long as the water is exiting at a lower point than the source and the pipes are full then it will flow, even if it needs to climb a little in between. The biggest problem is making sure the pipes stay full. If they get an air bubble everything stops until you charge the system and get the bubble out."

Wow, Foster could see how it worked. He never could have thought it up but now seeing it makes him believe he could build one. He then asked, "Tell me about the water closet. I understand how the cold water gets there. I opened the back of mine and it's another siphon. When the weight of the water in the bowl goes up it flushes out the bowl, then a valve drops allowing it to fill again and magically shuts off when the float reaches a certain height."

"Well, that's a perfect description of how it works."

"Yeah, but where does the stuff go."

"Ah, the sewage."

"Yeah, the sewage".

"Well, gravity is involved again. The end point for the sewage has to be lower than the source, this time you are the source." William then walks Foster outside to show him the septic tank. It was strategically placed down wind of the hotel. "It all ends up here. Once a week a team comes and empties it. That's a good day to be at the falls. It can get stinky while they are removing it."

"I can understand with a hotel as large as this charging as much as they do how you can build a system like this. What about a house?"

"Well, all the fixtures and pipes on the inside remain pretty much the same. The hot water tank gets smaller. It's the outside stuff that changes. You said you're from Buffalo right?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I'm the engineer designing the system for Buffalo and Niagara Falls that changes everything."

"How?"

"By providing municipal water and sewage."

"All new homes, starting next year or maybe the next will be built on property serviced by water and sewer lines. There's going to be lots of jobs in ditch digging."

"Maybe I don't understand. You mean every house is going to have a smaller system like this?"

"No," he continued, "The city will dig trenches, usually at the road's edge and put in sewer lines and water lines. Each builder will have to connect to them. Your water will be supplied, and your sewage will go away."

"From where and to where?"

"There will be water reservoirs that will pump water into big water tanks in various neighborhoods. That water will be supplied to each home. On the other side the sewage made in each home will go into the sewer lines and proceed to a facility where it is treated."

"Who pays for all this?"

"Well, the homeowner will buy water and that will eventually pay off the cost of creating the system. The sewage will be a tax, added to your other taxes. It's the only way it can get done. Gone are the days of the outhouse. Every new home will have sewer and water. The cost to build it in each house will be factored into the price of the home just like cabinets or fancy doors and windows. So, if anyone is buying land to build houses had best make sure it has sewer and water lines or he won't be able to build until those services get there."

"Wow, that's gonna change where we build homes."

"Yeah, rural property with lots of land will be able to build with septic tanks and well water. But all the houses in close will need these services. The city publishes a list of streets that will be serviced and when. A land speculator needs to be buying cheap just in front of where the development is going to go. Land with these services will be worth two- or three-times land without."

Wow, Foster's mind was on fire. Could he take this knowledge and the little money he had and double up his holdings? I need to talk to Sarah about this. He thanked William for the tour and asked when he was going to be in Buffalo again. William gave Foster a card and an invitation to come to his office to see the plans. He added that he could arrange a tour of the sewage treatment plant under construction. Foster couldn't thank William enough and promised he would make time to get together.

Foster then went back to his room. He woke up Sarah the way she likes. An hour or so later they got dressed and took their afternoon ride.

"Ok, that's the end of story time, we've got a restaurant to run. What time is the coffee guy showing up?"

"This afternoon. He already called to make sure we had everything set up with the plumbing and power."

"Give me a holler when he gets here. I need to learn how to do those drinks also".

Ed went back in the kitchen, said hi to Harry, checked his notes and inventory levels. All is good. He had both girls

coming in to learn the computer and 3 people to interview all seeking work. It's going to be a busy day. He

then asked Harry. "How long would it take for you to start cooking the new menu items we talked about?"

Harry answered, "A day. I have got everything I need for the sauces. I'll need the ground beef for the meatballs, the sausages, more chicken and the new pastas. I figure we need linguini and angel hair. Other than that, I need to fix up a drawer."

"A drawer?" Ed asked.

"Yeah, I need to three quarter cook the different pastas and then nest them in service sizes in a drawer. Now when I get an order I flash boil them a couple minutes, add the sauce and we are ready to go. As time goes on I'll get a better handle on how many serving to have ready of each. Don't worry, I've done this before and they come out great."

Ed said, "No, I know that. I'm just glad that you were ahead of me on that one. You're a good man sir. Make up a shopping list. Let's be ready to serve on Friday."

Harry suggested, "Actually, I think Thursday would be better. We know Friday is going to be busy. I'd rather have a quieter day under my belt before all hell breaks loose."

"No, you're right. Let's work the kinks out with a smaller crowd. Good thinking."

Harry tried to hold back his smile at doing good. No chance.

The other phone company came in and gave an uninspiring quote out of a catalogue he had and said it would be 2 weeks to install. He called back Lisa and told her to proceed. The phones and new lines will be in no later than tomorrow. She was good.

At 10:30 the girls showed up to learn the computer. Donnie was there too. As soon as he got there he asked if he needed to put the prices in.

Ed said, "no I got them all in last night. It took a while and I imagine there will be some changes as we start moving along."

Ed went through a number of examples on the computer and then asked the girls to practice by giving each other an order. It was fun watching them trying to trip each other up with something tricky.. Everybody ordered half and half pizzas. The part they liked was that they didn't have to turn in the orders, that it happened automatically. This was big at the bar, where before they would have to order their drinks, stand their waiting until they were up. Now they would be able to go to the bar and have their drinks waiting for them. Cool.

The moment of truth is upon us, the first customers started to come in the door.

Karen had the first order. Donnie and Ellen looked on as she entered the data. She grabbed her receipt and said, "piece of cake".

The printers started to hum at the bar, the pizza station and Harry's station at the stove.

Ed looked over at Harry and said "click, click, click."

Harry pulled his slip and answered back "click, click".

It was going ok. Ed walked out to the bar to make sure Gene was doing ok.

"I got it partner. No big deal so far."

It got busy. But it was working. All of a sudden Gene called to Ed from the bar.

Ed went out to see Gene trying to cash out a customer. He was momentarily blinded. Ed stepped in and told him the first thing you need to do is enter your own number and then the ticket number. Gene remembered and said "ok, I've got it now."

Ed went back to pizzas.

Lunch was brisk. Clearly up 20% from an historical lunch. It got to be 2:00 and the crowd left. There were still 4 men at the bar watching tv. Ed checked in with the girls and Harry. All good. He then went out to see Gene. "Well did you survive the rush?"

"Yeah, it was good. It's sometimes tough keeping up with the service bar when the bar is full. That's not a computer problem it's more staffing. It was good being able to fill the girl's orders without having to look at them waiting."

Ed then said, "OK let me show you some of the good things we haven't talked about. Ed went to the manager's screen and pulled up data. We know instantly how much each waitress sold, we know the numbers of food items sold by type and size. Tomorrow it will add this data together and give us daily totals along with cumulative totals. Evenings are tallied independent of lunches and then added together. We can track what sold and when. This info will tell us what our inventory levels should be. Once you get into it, you'll see what a cool tool it is."

"No, I'm a believer. Right now, I'm just glad I was able to do my part without screwing it up."

"I never had a doubt."

"Yeah, I know, have faith."

Ed went back in the kitchen and called Donnie over. "I want to teach you more stuff. First I want to show you how to make pizzas."

"OK",

Ed took him through spinning and spreading the pies. Ed already had cups that measured out the right amount of cheese for the different sizes. He had two scoops for the sauce. One for large and one for small. Placing the toppings was more by eye than exact measurement. You'll get that as you go along. Now we are firing them in the oven. By the time you get to do this for real we will have our conveyor. He then went over the specialty pizzas. Donnie was a quick study. He then took Donnie out to the bar.

"Gene, teach Donnie how to tend the service bar".

Gene looked up and smiled. "Yeah, a good idea. I'll skip the fancy drinks at first but show him how to do the rest."

"Yeah, if you get slammed out here it would be great to slide Donnie in to share the load. I can do the same thing. Meanwhile I showed him how to do the same thing on the pizza line. This is a crazy business. Sometimes the bar gets hit and sometimes it's the kitchen. Having a guy to step in and help is huge".

"Yeah, I agree." Gene started teaching Donnie as Ed went back to talk to the girls.

Both of them had submitted names to be considered for employment. "I'm meeting with the people you recommended this afternoon. Tell me about them."

The girls shared what they knew about each. Both really liked this one girl Dorothy. She had worked at a diner, so she knew some things about service. Her tips are horrible over there, so she is hoping to move up. Ed made notes on each, thanked the girls and went to his desk. Just then a man walked into the kitchen wearing a shirt, tie and no sports coat. He was carrying some catalogues. Salesman.

He asked, "are you Ed?" After a nod he said "your brother asked me to drop by to see if I can sell you some product."

Shook hands and suggested a seat in the dining room.

He asked to see the menu. Ed walked him over to the computer. He clicked a few times and said, "this will be our menu in two days."

Daniel said "I love this system. I will know what you need in just a minute or so. Did you know that I can post your order back into this system, so it shows up in your inventory?"

"No, I didn't know that. Very interesting. Well, take the time to do your homework and then will sit down again to talk."

"Ok about 15 minutes,"

"Cool."

Ed went back to his desk and began posting things on his calendar poster. Things checked off and things added on in the appropriate color.

Dan came back in and said, "you got the time?"

"Sure, sit down."

Ed called Harry over and introduced them. Dan began "I think I can save you money on your cheese, pepperoni, chicken and pastas."

He began describing the items. "I've got some samples in the car, can I Bring them in."

"Sure."

He went to a cooler he had in the truck and brought back some items for tasting.

"Can I make a couple pizzas?"

"Go for it."

Dan made 2 small pies. He knew how. He made one with his cheese and pepperoni and one with what we have been using.

He asked, "what are you paying for these items." As Ed showed him his price list he said, "I'm doing ok on the

cheese but I'm spending too much for the pepperoni, but it is good pepperoni."

"Ok, our cheese is \$2.20 less per 5-pound bag and our pepperoni saves you over \$ 4.00 per bag."

The pizzas came out and they sampled each. His cheese was better and the pepperoni about the same.

"How much flour are you going through, at what price?"

After comparing figures, it turned out that they could save there as well.

Dan stated, "We sell the little stuff too. Yeast, spices and the like. I'll leave you a price list so you can check it out. We would deliver to you on Monday and Thursday. We can accept changes to your order up to a day in advance. We bill monthly and post our orders to your system."

Ed called Gene in and introduced him to Dan. He then gave him a review of their conversation.

Dan then added we also have olives, cherries and all the other bar supplies. It's on the price sheet.

Ed then summed it up by saying all of it is as good or better than what we are using, cheaper, delivered twice weekly, billed monthly and the orders automatically post to our computer system.

"Sounds like a no brainer to me." Gene volunteered, "Do you ever offer specials or promotional materials."

"Specials, yes, all the time. Promotional materials not so much but you being a new customer that hopefully could turn into a large account, I'll ask my boss if there isn't something we can do."

ED said, "I'll fill out an order right now. This will be delivered Thursday?"

"Right. Do you make your tomato sauce from scratch?"

"No, we start with a can and doctor our way to what we want".

"I'm going to throw in a can of our base sauce and our ground tomatoes. Try it out. I think you'll like it."

"We'll give it a shot. Do you need a check with the order?"

"No just pay your invoice at the end of the month. Thanks for the order." Dan left.

The three men looked at each other and smiled. That was easy. Harry volunteered to check out other items like flour, butter, eggs and compare prices.

Just then the coffee machine rep showed up. Here we go again.

Gene was doing the coffee guy. After about an hour he called Ed in. Donnie was still there so he called him over also.

The salesman took them through everything from grinding the beans, storage of beans and clean up. Finally he took everyone through the procedures to make espressos, and everything else. We all tried out working the different components all the way to finished drinks. There were a few questions but not many.

Gene finally said in a bit of a weird voice, "well I guess we're a coffee house now".

Ed said, "like everything else, you'll get used to it. Have ..."

Gene finished "Faith, yeah I know."

The three new potential employees showed up on time for their interviews. They were handed applications. Only Dorothy had her own pen. The information on the ap didn't say much because they were young and hadn't done much yet. The girls were right, Dorothy was a keeper. The other two were iffy. All had computer awareness, one Steven had worked as a construction helper. That might come in handy.

After the last one left Ed asked Harry, Donnie and the girls to come over. He said, "I know you have been looking at the new items on the computer screen. Well, we are going to start serving them on Thursday night. To make sure we don't get bored that will be the same night that we will be using our new pizza conveyor. Don't get nervous, all will work out, I hope." They smiled. "Here's a new extra credit job for you guys. You don't have to participate but I think you will want to. I'm trying to keep everyone involved in the changes going down. By the way did Donnie take you through making the coffee drinks. They nodded. Ok here's the plan. Thursday night we need a new menu. We might be changing items or prices as we go along so I need a new interim menu. I want it to be made on the computer, in color, with short descriptions of each new dish. Harry's got other menus that are serving and describing the same items. Plagiarize and change at will. See how they separate items like pizza, pastas, desserts, coffees etc. Come up with a size and layout. We will make a master and take it to the copy shop to make a couple dozen copies. When we are done, I want to laminate them. Do you see where I'm going."

"Yeah."

"This is cool."

"This will be fun."

"You need a lunch menu too. We might want an abbreviated menu to place on the tables in the bar. I'm open to ideas. Remember we are "The Shiny Bucket" Think about a logo. In a couple days I'm getting 500 fridge magnets to give away. There's nothing fancy there. We've got name, address and a big phone number with the words dine in, takeout and delivery. The menu needs to be classier than that. Who wants to take point on this." All hands went up, but Karen looked like the most excited.

"OK, work as a team. Give me a first draft before dinner tomorrow."

"Really? That soon?"

"Yeah, I know, but we are all pushing the envelope here. We'll kick around the first draft and finalize our collective ideas. That will give me Thursday afternoon to get them printed up. Remember this is not the final product but it will probably work for us for a month or so. Harry's got the menus and is available to answer any questions about the individual dishes. Are we cool with this? Most jobs don't allow you to exercise your creative side. Here's a chance. A couple more things. I really liked Dorothy and asked her to come in on Thursday to shadow you guys. We will put her on the floor on Friday. Remember the coffee machine was placed where it is to offer access to you. I want you to make your coffee drinks. Practice a couple times to get comfortable. I'll bet your first order will come in when you are the busiest. That's the restaurant business."

"Donnie, I also asked Steven, a new guy to show up on Friday. I need you to take him through dish washing and bussing."

"Ok, what am I going to be doing?"

"Stay loose."

The night went along pretty well. The only computer glitch came when the printer at pizza station got jammed. Ed remembered how to change it out from the old days. While he was doing it he showed Harry and Donnie. He would show everyone else later on. Gene took a break and walked in the kitchen to talk to Ed. As he walked through the dining room he noticed Donnie, Karen and Ellen sitting at a table talking. He pointed it out to Ed and asked." What a union meeting?"

"No, I've asked them to design our interim menu. They're sharing ideas. By the way I got the call from Lisa, our new phones and numbers will be here tomorrow morning."

"I can barely answer the one phone."

"That's the idea, with more phones more people can answer. Wait until we launch delivery."

"I'm trying to picture it. I'm not there but I'm trying. Are you ok with everything that's going on in the kitchen?"

"I think so. Harry and I have a meeting later to finalize some stuff, but I think we know what we're doing. Did you make any coffees tonight?"

"As a matter of fact, I made an espresso and a cappuccino. I had to talk myself through the procedure, but I got it done. I imagine I will get faster as I move along."

"Before you even ask there will be no story time tonight. I'll give you a short one in the morning."

"Alright, I've got Bill coming in for a half hour. I want to show him the computer and the coffees."

"Look at you. No longer the student now you're the teacher. I've got lots of stuff to finish up back there. Let's talk in an hour or so."

Leslie called, "Are you still at the shop?"

"You're kidding right."

"If you're going to be there I could stop by and show you some stuff. I've already eaten, so don't ask. I could go for a glass of wine though."

"You got it. See ya' when you get here." Ed said happily. He was a professional restaurant person so he knew how to have his "restaurant face" on to broadcast to all his customers that all is good and you are going to enjoy your evening. His genuine happy face that came with every chance to talk to Leslie looked different. It was a genuine look with softened eyes.

Leslie pulled up just as everyone except Gene was leaving. She was carrying an easel. The three met in the bar. Gene poured drinks around.

"I see you brought the easel, wait 'till you see what I've got." Ed returned with a wood framed white board and box of markers.

Gene said, "what, did you do that in your spare time?"

"Hey, it cost four bucks and about 20 minutes in my garage. The markers cost more than the board." Ed set it up on the easel, "looks good."

Gene and Leslie just smiled. Leslie said, "ok first things first. Here's the order number for the paint you need for the ceiling tiles. I bet it's going to take five gallons for each room but start with five and see how far you get. You really need three guys and it's better with four. One guy is taking the tiles down and walking them to a painting station outside. One guy is painting with the other guy setting them up and placing them on a tarp with a 2x4 laying there to keep most of the tile off the ground. The first guy is cleaning the grid with soapy water. It takes about 2 hours to dry. Then put them back in. I see you've got a couple busted tiles in each room. You'll probably bust a couple more while painting. So, buy some extra tiles when you pick up the paint. Sound simple enough?"

Gene said, "maybe we should do this next Monday when we are closed."

Ed agreed and made a note. Leslie looked around the bar and commented that the TVs looked great. With the new ceiling paint, you're pretty well done except for hanging some memorabilia. Gene commented on some of things he found and liked and wanted Ed and Leslie to approve. They immediately gave the go-ahead.

Leslie then continued to the dining room. "If I had a bigger budget I would change the lighting but I think we can soften the room up nicely without. The new ceiling will help. I like the chair rail idea. Make it the height of the bottom windowsill of the three windows. Remember to draw a straight line along the wall in the middle of where the chair rail is going to go so the people covering the top and bottom know where to stop without thinking. I think the bottom should be a fresh, off white washable latex. The top I think should be rice cloth. It comes in different shades; I like this one." She shared a book of swatches opened to her selection.

Ed said, "you're the doctor, what else?"

"You're going to need hanging plants in each of the windows, plus two potted plants at the entrance to the room. I found some great colored prints online that are way cheap. \$10 - \$15 each. There are three of Rome, three of Venice, one of Pisa and a couple of vineyards. All pretty. Mat, frame and hang them and the whole room will look cool."

Gene added, "hey, that Pisa picture, we can put up a photo of a leaning tower of pizza next to it?"

Ed and Leslie looked up with no expression

Gene said, "or not".

Leslie had numbers for paint, plants, rice cloth, prints, frames and even the chair rail. Everything is within budget so far. Then Leslie said, "let's move on to the entranceway."

Ed had never thought about the entrance, and all this stuff is a new trail for Gene.

Leslie took a sip of her wine and then began. "OK, you pull up in the parking lot and the first thing you notice is the new exterior, consisting of fresh paint, some window treatments, new door, handicap access and an island of pretty landscaping that is illuminated. Then you walk into this."

All three look around.

"We'll be doing the ceiling; you'll have your easel but we need more. First you will need a small podium to hold the book."

Gene said, "the book?"

Ed said, "yeah, I should have been thinking of this. We're going to have reservations, people waiting and the status of tables coming available in the dining room. I didn't think success would be a problem this early, but what we are doing before we start any marketing tells me we better get ready for it to show up."

Gene said, "nice problem."

Leslie continued, "right now it is just junked up. The wood here is ok, it just needs a fresh stain. You need a bench over here, a picture over there and a shiny bucket sitting on the podium filled with mints and a small rack with take home menus. Actually, are you still trying to get an article in the Trib?"

"Yeah, I haven't called them yet, but I think that's a gimme." Ed reported.

"On this wall you should have a framed copy of that article."

"Cool"

"Very cool."

Ed said, "Ok I'm good with everything so far. We need one more guy for the ceiling team, but I think I know who that will be. Picking up the paint, rollers etc. is a blue Job."

Leslie looked puzzled. Gene said, "I got it," then Leslie understood.

Ed added, "I can paint, I can miter, cut and hang the chair rails. I don't know diddly about plants and I've never worked with wallpaper, certainly not rice cloth."

Leslie responded, "Well isn't it lucky that those are the two things I'm good at. On that second Monday move the furniture to the center away from all walls, draw your straight line, measure, paint and cut your chair rails and paint the lower section. I'll come in after work and eat a free great pizza. After that have the table set up for cutting and pasting with two people that can follow instructions and we'll have this room papered up in less than three hours. You can be hanging the chair rail as we finish each wall. It's really not that hard if you know what you are doing."

Gene sat there with the same amazed look on his face that he has displayed so many times in the recent past. "The part that gets me is that I can actually see all this shit getting done. Look Leslie I'm the gopher here. Can you make sure I have a good list of everything I need? Not only the paint and paper but the tools that go with it?"

"You'll have that before I leave. Now do either one of you want to know the names of the plants I've selected?"

"Not really."

"If it works for you it works for me."

"OK, but I want you to ok my landscaping plan."

The two partners looked at each other like it was Christmas. Then calmly said, "sure show us."

She pulled out a drawing. The area was wider than a parking space on the building side and narrower on the front side which was about a parking space and a half away. It kind of looked like Africa except for there was no big indentation for the Ivory Coast. She had markings indicating the placement of different plants. For each plant she had planting size, full size and cost. She emphasized that you need water and light. The light to make sure it would be appreciated by the customers and the water to make sure that the investment lived. They walked outside and saw there was a hose bib near the front of the building on the East side. All you need is a fifty-foot hose and someone to remember to use it."

While the three of them were standing in the parking lot Leslie reenacted the placement with hand gestures showing the heights of each section and even the placement of site lighting. Gene had never been a big visualization guy, but he could see it. Ed easily drank it in.

Gene then said, "with everything else going on we don't really need to start this project right away."

Ed responded, "well maybe we do. Remember Pauli's guys will be over to work on the entrance. That's when we need to run the electrical. Plus, Pauli's other guy is coming on his schedule, not ours to bust up and carry away the pavement. When he does that, I will get my other guy to deliver the dirt. It's one of those projects that once you start you must keep going. The good news is the heavy lifting is being done by someone else. All we do is schedule. Once we have a mound of dirt with an electrical line to it then we plant the posies. Leslie what's the border?"

"Primarily landscaping timbers. I've worked in some curved pieces of masonry to break it up and give you more flexibility in the design of your border. Remember when you are placing those landscaping timbers that you need to drill two large holes in each so you can anchor them with tie rods."

Gene motioned to the inside with a "I need another drink".

As they sat at the bar Ed got up and went to the kitchen to check on a few things and get his notebook. Gene said to Leslie, "You certainly have a skill. If I wasn't so lucky how much would I be paying a firm that does what you did to do for me?"

"Probably about \$5,000, with no easel."

"God, I owe you a lot of Pizza."

"Wine too. Besides, In a lower voice, I have an ulterior motive."

"I thought I noticed a glint more than job satisfaction. Now If I can get Ed to slow down enough to have a life, I think he would spark too."

Leslie warned, "Don't go changing Ed, he is in his glory right now. Yeah, he's busy but he is over the top fulfilled. That doesn't happen often in life."

"Yeah, I'm on the same ride. I got to tell you it is invigorating. And the book makes it just that much better."

"What book?"

"Maybe I said more than I was supposed to. When the time is right ask him."

Leslie nodded as Ed returned. "Your blue list is getting longer. My list is longer than I can see. Hey, one at a time,

we knock 'em down."

Gene said, "Well on top is what we need to do to get us through the weekend. As we get in control of that we need to be prepped for the Monday ceiling paint project."

Ed added, "I've got a couple things I need to coordinate with Pauli. When you lump it all together it sounds like a lot but when you break it down.... it's still a lot. We can do it."

The three of them talked for a while exchanging details and making lists. Finally, Leslie said, "I've got to get going. It's an early day tomorrow. Training day."

Ed walked her to the car thanking her all along the way. As they got to the car they talked about their next scheduled appointment, when she added, "you know we could get together socially."

Ed smiled and said, "I'd like that a lot. You know my goofy work schedule. Are you open to a weeknight 10:00 date, maybe even later weekends?"

"I wouldn't mind going out for a late-night drink or two."

Ed said, "I'll call," and with that leaned in and kissed Leslie. Not a movie kiss, but not a junior high kiss either. Leslie smiled got in the car and drove off. Ed stood there for a couple seconds wondering if what he did was good or bad. For him it was really good. He just didn't know if he should be getting involved when everything else is flying by at 90 miles per hour. He walked inside.

Gene looked up at Ed paused and then said, "you kissed her didn't ya'?"

"God am I that transparent?"

"Yes. Besides it's a good thing. You need some life in your life. Watch out though, she's a keeper."

"We'll see, but I think you're right she might very well be a keeper. I'm going home to try to get my head around the next couple of days."

"Good night partner."

CHAPTER 12 COMING HOME - NEW MENU

The next morning both Gene and Ed were at the Bucket before 9:30. Every day has been close to twelve hours. Thank God this is fun because if it was work it would really suck. They started their morning talk over a cup of fresh coffee about that very subject. Gene was saying, "you know this is fun and exciting and all but we need to schedule ourselves a day off every week. We should be smart enough to do that."

Ed added, "yeah maybe after we hit the grand opening. Everything up until then is quite tight. When we get that one behind us, I agree we should both schedule some time off. But now we've got now. This is the last day before the shit hits the fan. Tomorrow we've got a new oven and new menu, and then the weekend. How are you set in the short run?"

"Well, I've changed my orders for larger inventory. My new top shelf liquor comes in today. I've reorganized my liquor room. I think I'm ok. How about you?"

"Well, our phone lady has been here since 9:00. Her crew has been from the pole to the box and now they are running wire to place the phones. She's checking with me on the exact placement of each. In a little while I'm going over inventory needs with Harry for the Thursday roll out. I'm meeting with the kids later, on the menu design. Our first food order is coming in tomorrow. Part of my meeting with Harry is about dry storage. I think we are going to need another shelf. He's been working on food storage forever but now we have lots of new stuff. We need to talk through how to get it organized. Other than that, I keep thinking about a kiss."

"Good man. Hey, she said she had training day today. Right? Let's send over a couple pies to her office before lunch. What do you think?"

"You're brilliant. I think there's eight people in her office, three pies?"

"Sounds good."

Ed got through his meeting with Harry and got the phone placement agreed upon, made his pies and wondered if he should have Donnie drive them down or if he should do it himself. He decided to have Donnie cover the line and he would make the delivery. When he got to Leslie's office, he could hear the class in the conference room. The receptionist looked up surprised to see a man carrying three pizzas. She went into the conference room and came out with Leslie.

"Oh my God, what a surprise."

"Hey, you've been great and you said it was training day. I thought we could supply a nice lunch."

"Come here let me introduce you." She pulled Ed into the conference room saying "I'd like you all to meet the owner of the shiny Bucket, previously known as the Rusty Bucket. They are doing over their menu and facilities. Ed was nice enough to bring us lunch."

Ed just added, "Eat well and learn well." A little applause and a big thank you from Leslie. Ed said, "I've got to get back."

By the time he got back there were six tickets up for pizzas. Donnie was keeping up great. Ed looked at each pie, one was a little short on pepperoni but all good. Gene had eight at the bar and two deuces at lounge tables. The dining room had 5 tables seated and there were people at the door. Ed thought take care of seating the people first. He seated the two new parties and brought them water, menus and garlic bread. He told them Ellen would be over in a bit. He could see that she was busy, so he took drink orders at each table. He knew Ellen's employee number, so he started tickets for both parties in her name. He went and got the drinks that were ready when he got there. He served them and gave Ellen the tickets. "Are you ok?"

"Now I am. Thanks." Ellen said with a smile.

Lunch continues to pick up for a while then it ended. That's the way it is with lunch. It comes in quick and ends quick. People have an hour. That made Ed think, what can we offer as a quick menu? I need to check with the servers later, on this one. As things settled down a little Ed asked Donnie if he had heard from the girls on menu ideas.

Donnie smiled and said, "To my surprise I actually have heard from them. They already have one-line descriptions worked out for all the new dishes. They have a list of the new coffee drinks. They think they know how they want to display the pizza choices. And of all of Harry's menus they picked the one they like the best to use as a model to

lay ours out. Actually, I was quite impressed.”

“Who will actually do it on the computer?”

“Probably me. I can do it in Powerpoint. I’ve already got the sections made up from the menu they selected. Now it’s plug in the data. We can change it at will and spit out as many copies as you want from the printer. If you want to laminate them or two side copy then run them down to the copy store. Cheap.”

Ed said, “Very cool. Donnie do you like it here so far?”

“I love it. I get to do new stuff all the time and you; Harry and Gene seem to like what I do.”

Ed cautioned, “These next three weeks are going to be out there. We’re going to have new stuff and new problems almost every day. We’ve got lots of fix up work to do. Lots of hiring and training to do and a whole new division called delivery to get working. It could turn into a “hair on fire” experience if we don’t stay cool. Are you ready for that?”

“Bring it on.”

“OK, show me something with this menu. After closing tonight we’ve got to pull the old ovens and take them out. Tomorrow morning, they install the conveyor. Tomorrow night we launch our new menu. I’ve got three new people coming in to learn the system and shadow people. I’ll need you to take two of them through the bussing dishwasher thing. Take them through setting up the soft drinks. Then Monday is a full day as we take down, paint and put up all the ceiling tiles. The Monday after that we paint out the dining room and in between there we are painting the outside as well. If you want hours, you can get them.”

“Oh yeah, I want hours. I’m young, I can handle it. When you paint the outside are you rolling or spraying?”

“Spraying, mostly.”

“I can work a gun. My dad taught me.”

There was a lull after lunch, so Ed thought he’d get his story telling out of the way. He’s been good at recording all the sessions. That will be important when he goes to print. Ed goes. “let’s finish up the honeymoon.”

“Cool.”

They took a day trip to the whirlpool. They rode every day. They went to the falls every day and most days included Goat Island. They got their pictures back from the photographer. Sarah looked beautiful and Foster thought he looked dumb. Sarah did not agree. They bought the tea set for Aunt Helen, and Foster surprised Sarah with a scarf that had a hand painted picture of the falls. She was thrilled. Their first week together had been splendid. But it was time to head home. They said goodbye and thanked all the people they had met at the hotel. Poli was harnessed up and waiting in front of the hotel. The bellman had carried and loaded the luggage. It was time to leave.

As they took to the road they looked back and smiled. What a wonderful place Sarah said. Foster agreed. They began telling stories to each other reminiscing about events that took place just days ago. What fun. The first new subject to come up was where to live. It was funny but neither of them had thought about that until now. Sarah

had been to Foster's place. It was small with very little cooking space. Foster thought they would stay there for the rest of the month then find a bigger place more suited to a couple. Then Sarah said there is another option.

"At the end of the hall in our apartment there is a big room we use to store our inventory. Aunt Helen offered to move the inventory into my room and make the other room available to us for free."

Foster paused before reacting. Finally, he said, "I don't know if it is right for newlyweds to live with family."

"I know but our room would be far away from Aunt Helens, in fact farther than your room is from your landlady's. Don't feel beholden to Aunt Helen. She doesn't want to live alone, eat alone and have no one to talk to. She would make a point of staying out of our way."

"I know, I know, it just isn't what I thought my first place would be."

"I know but it is big comfortable and free. It would make it easier to build the nest egg we need to move West."

"Do you think we're ever going to be able to do that?"

"Yes, I do. You'll see we're going to do it."

"God, I hope so. I want to stare off into the distance as far as I can and still be looking at my own land."

"I want a home that you will build that we will use to raise our children. That book I'm reading makes it out to be hard work but I don't care. I want to be a prairie woman."

They started talking about all the things that they had to learn before they venture out. Sarah had been making a list of things for her to learn. Foster said that he hadn't written anything down, but he knew of some skills he wanted to develop before the adventure began. He commented that he had building skills better than most people.

Sarah quickly agreed.

Foster said "I bet I could earn a living helping others build their homes. Some of it is just hard work but a lot of it is know how. I got the know-how. Yeah, I want to build my own spread, but it is good to know that I have a skill that could earn money if we need it. Knowing how to dig a well, hook up a pump and connect it to a windmill could be a service worth a lot of money out there."

Sarah spoke up quickly, "everything you know would be useful to folks that don't have that skill. They're all going to need to build homes, get water, all the things you know how to do. You will be an important man in the area."

"I'm not looking to be important; I just want to help us survive."

"We'll more than survive we will flourish." Sarah said proudly.

"When we talk like this, I actually believe we can do it."

"We can and I believe we will. But if we don't, we will live a great life in Buffalo. It is all good for me as long as I have you."

CHAPTER 13 CROSS TRAINING, HOW MUCH MORE PI, - THE INHERITANCE

Ed said, "Ok, let's get back to work." Gene commented, "I hope they get their own place. Newlyweds should live alone."

"Yeah, but times were different then. Family was a big thing. They were all that each other had. Anyway, we'll get back to the story later. Are you good for tonight?"

"I think so, how about you?"

"Yeah, it's weird we don't have anything earth shaking going on tonight."

"Well not completely true. We've got to get that oven moved out. That's gonna' be a ball buster."

"Once we get through dinner Harry is taking my truck to go get that cart of his. That should make it easier."

"Make sure Donnie is here for this one." Gene added.

"He knows. Once we get that out of here, we are going to need to give the area a serious cleaning. There are places under there that haven't seen soap in decades. It's going to be ugly."

"Yeah, we've got some stuff back in the shed that cleans anything. If we hit it a couple times with that it'll come clean."

The night went smoothly. Busy but no big problems. We had 5 pickup orders.

The conveyor man dropped off the boxes for tomorrow's installation. We put them in the back office.

Karen was on duty tonight, but Ellen came in about 8:15 to finish up the design questions with Karen and Donnie. Ed was tickled.

Everything closed down and Harry took the truck to go get the cart. Donnie and the servers called a meeting with Ed to discuss the menu. Ed was blown away.

Donnie had printed out a couple copies of a front page and back page. Ed started looking it over and quickly stood up and called, "Hey Gene come here".

Gene came strutting in the dining room saying, "what's wrong?"

Just then Harry came walking in and joined the group.

Ed said, "I'm sorry. Nothing is wrong, on the contrary see what these guys made up." He showed him a copy.

Gene responded, "This looks great, are you kidding me? Who made this?"

Ed pointed at the three of them. "Yeah, I'm impressed too. We need to hard edit for spelling, syntax and capitalization. We need Harry to edit for content on the descriptions of the dishes. But once we are through that, we will take the masters to the printer and have them 2 side printed and laminated. We will also 2 side print black and white copies. They will become our menu we hand out to promote our pickup and delivery business. We need stacks of them at the door, at the bar and one copy taped to every pizza box that leaves this place. OK, now I'll get a little strange on you. In a week or two we will have an article in the Trib that has a picture of our new

exterior and says all kinds of good stuff about our food and service. We're going to make a copy of that article and clip it to this menu with our new fridge magnet. We will have over 800 delivered to all the homes in our neighborhood."

Gene looked up and said quietly, "holy shit"

The kids were beaming. They kept interrupting each other with "this rocks", "holy crap" and "we're gonna sell a ton" along with other random statements. They felt so proud that they designed the menu. Gene got up grabbed a pitcher of beer, glasses and a diet coke. As he set them down he said "I am so proud of all of you."

This was a special moment for everyone.

Ed had wanted to go over the procedure for starting someone else's table and how to help with soda preparations. This was not the time. Just let the moment continue.

They all finished up their normal closing duties as Harry, Donnie and Ed maneuvered the cart over next to the oven. The cart was sturdy so we thought it could handle the weight. The oven was a little bigger than the cart so there would be a hangover. They had already measured the doorway and oven to make sure it would fit. Now it is just lifting. What a heavy sucker. The cart was the perfect height. They "walked" the oven back and forth until you could tip the oven towards the cart giving everyone enough room for the four of them to all get their hands underneath. Before they could do that Donnie had to crawl up on the oven, reach down and turn off the gas valve. Gene handed him a wrench to disconnect the oven. Now it's 3,2,1, lift and the last ten inches were negotiated with little pain. They wheeled it to the door and had to muscle it through. While they were doing that Karen and Ellen pulled the table the oven sat on away from the wall. What a mess. They moved the table further out and began sweeping the debris off the floor. Gene came back with his magical cleaning solution. He made up a bucket of soapy water and took the first whack at the floor with a mop. It really did start to pick up the dirt. Ellen took the mop from her uncle and kept working the floor.

By now the oven was moved out. They made the executive decision to leave it on the cart for now. Whatever the outcome of the oven the cart would probably be helpful for its next move. The guys came back in and saw the ladies working on the floor. Donnie quickly took the water bucket and changed out the water. It needed it. Gene showed him the measurements to make his cleaning brew. Donnie quickly took over the whole clean up job. The ladies not to be undone quickly went to work on cleaning the table. Once that was done it was moved to the back yard as well.

The kitchen looked so weird with the oven gone. Ed was visualizing the placement of more than the conveyor. He had planned it out on paper but now it is for real. Basically, the flow of the pizza has changed drastically. They had been preparing on one side, placing in the oven and then retrieving to the same side. Now you prepare on one side put it on the conveyor and it comes out the other side. Ed could move his current prep tables over to where the oven was. He would have enough room for his racks and trays of dough balls. All that is fine, what he didn't plan for was the table at the end of the line where the pizzas exit. This is where you cut and box the pizzas after you spread the garlic butter sauce on the crust. Ok, so I need an 8-foot table with an underneath shelf, by lunch. I can do that.

Everybody said goodbye and left. Gene and Ed were the last standing yet another time.

"Hey, I've got another blue job for you and it's a big one."

"Whatcha' got?"

"I'm thinking a simple system, maybe as simple as big legal envelopes. Make up one for each category of our budget. On the outside of the envelope write down the name of the category, the amount of the budget and a brief description of what needs to be done within that category. On the inside of the envelope put in all the bills, invoices and status of payment. We can change budget amounts if we agree on what needs to be done, but we should be aware of where we stand. If neither of us is keeping track, we could get excited with all the stuff going on and not notice that we are under water on our estimates. What do you think?"

"I like it and that's the kind of thing I can do. When we get further along you will need. To..."

"Yeah, I'll make up a computer spreadsheet and all the reports that go along with that. But what we need now is accountability and awareness. As you start it you will come up with changes. My labor is free, but if we start putting Donnie or Steven hours into the project then we need to account for that."

"Who's Steven?"

"Yeah, another new guy for the dishwasher and some labor work as well."

"I was just asking."

"You'll meet him, he's a nice young man."

"Good. Yes, I can do this. Let me set it up and show it to you tomorrow."

"It doesn't have to be tomorrow." Ed said.

"Yeah, it does. If it were a red job, you'd have it tomorrow. Same thing for blue. I don't need the ramp entrance we're building just yet. I can keep up."

"I know." They both smiled and had another drink.

Gene said, "They blew me away with that menu today and then you talking about a news article menu and fridge magnet being delivered to 800 homes I freaked. We will get a bunch of those guys as customers."

"That's why we are doing this Gene."

"I know, I know but I think we are really going to do this. Are we going to be able to keep up? Gene asked with a look of hope in his eyes.

"Absolutely. That oven can make a gillion pies. Our stove and other ovens can grind out all the pasta meals we ask for. Once we have the customers all we need is the trained, motivated staff. We have enough infra structure. I need to focus on recruitment, training and motivation."

"How many things can you focus on at one time?"

"I don't know, but I bet we are going to find out. I need to call my brother and get his personnel guy to tutor me on how not to go crazy."

"We're all liable to end up in therapy. What keeps me sane are your stories. I still want to get to the land rush."

"We will. I have to admit that some story telling gives me a break from the madness. Good night partner."

“Good night.”

The next morning was an 8:00 call to work for Ed, Gene and Donnie. Aaron was there at 8:15 as promised. They began opening boxes. Gene was taking the cardboard and plastic wrappings out to the dumpster. Aaron was calling the shots with Ed and Donnie holding things in place while Aaron screwed it all together. About an hour and a half in it looked like it was supposed to be more or less. Still no gas or electric to the system. Ed was starting to get worried. What if there’s a problem with something? How do I cook Lunch?

Aaron could see his frustration and said “stay loose son, I’ve done dozens of these. We’ll be up and firing in another 40 minutes.”

Gene was actually happily surprised to see his partner a little rattled. He didn’t want to be the only one worried all the time.

About halfway through Harry came in to prep for lunch and dinner. He looked at this collection of metal and thought, I’m glad this is someone else’s problem.

Pauli’s electrician looked in and felt comfortable with the progress. He could tell that Aaron was skilled at this installation. Everybody felt comfortable except Ed. He was fidgeting. Walking around just nervous. You could tell when the electric was hooked up because the conveyor began to move. A few minutes later Aaron lit the pilot light. Shortly thereafter the oven was fired up and running. Ed finally began to relax. Aaron was taking everyone through the lighting procedures, shut down procedures, maintenance procedures and regular cleaning. The booklet that described all these procedures was mounted on the wall for all to use.

While Ed was pacing around waiting for the oven to be hooked up, he ran down to the store and got an 8 foot table. He came back to set it up as everything was getting completed. Donnie had already moved the other tables to the beginning of the line and set them up in a way that made sense for pizza building.

There was a dial that governed the speed of the conveyor. There were recommended settings but sometimes they are off a little at each location. Only way to figure it out was to fire up a pie. They did so and it turned out perfect. They then tried a tray of garlic bread, perfect again.

Gene was watching it all and made a mental note that this expensive computer system generated a slip to make a pie and an expensive elaborate piece of equipment cooked the pie, but the slip had to be hand carried from one end of the line to the other. Interesting.

Lunch got busy. Three orders came in from the bar. Gene entered them, Ed delivered them and Gene cashed them out. That worked.

The dining room filled up to having 9 tables all at different stages of service. ED floated through making Ellen’s job a lot easier. One time he noticed a back log in pizzas. He jumped in and spun up and spread 8 shells. Having them set up in order in front of Donnie was enough to get him out of his jam. He finished up building the pies and was back on track. Two of Ellen’s tables were parties of 6 and 8. When their orders came up Ed helped deliver the food.

Everybody made it through a busy lunch without any scars. One thing was interesting, nobody had a problem with the computers or printers. About 2:30 the dining room was empty with 4 tables yet to be bussed. The bar had 2 old regulars. Ed called everybody to the dining room for a quick meeting. Gene topped off his two guys and joined them.

Ed looked at everyone and said “today was a big day for me, I figured out what I’m going to do around here. I’m the floater like today.”

Ellen jumped in and said, “that works for me.”

Donnie joined in with, “I was stuck there for a minute, but when you stepped in and made those shells I got caught up quick.”

Ed began, “Here’s the way the restaurant business works, it’s fluid. Different functions, or people get slammed at different times. Just a little bit of help can get them back on the path. The problem is knowing what to do to help. When you are crazy busy and someone comes up to you and asks “what can I do?” it just adds to the problem.”

Ellen jumped in, “yeah it does. When I’ve got 6 things going on in my head and someone comes up to help, now I’ve got 7 things going on in my head.”

Ed said, “It’s a problem for the guy who wants to help also. What we all need to know is what someone is likely to need and then go and do it with minimum communications. So, station by station what could someone do to help you out if you were getting slammed.”

Gene surprisingly was the first to speak. “Coffee drinks. The customers love them, but they are a pain in my ass. If someone was around to make my coffees, I would be happy. After that it would be cashing out a customer and then pouring draft beer, maybe filling the ice bins.”

“OK that’s good. I don’t know about the checking out thing because that requires a management key number, but everything else is the kind of thing I’m looking for.”

Donnie went next. “Cutting and boxing pies. It’s hard to stay focused on building for the front of the machine when the back of the machine is spitting the pies out on the table. The other is making and spreading shells like you did today.”

Ed responded, “that’s good. With this new system I don’t think the pizza guy should be cutting pies at all. Sure if you’re not busy but basically I think the pies should be cut by servers, bussers and floaters.”

Harry chimed in with, “And occasionally a cook. There are times when I’m busy as hell back there but then there are other times. I could be cutting pies. When I’m getting slammed, I could use help with salads and garlic bread. It’s too complicated and way too close of quarters for anyone to help with anything else. But if someone was staying on top of the salads and garlic bread that would be a blessing.”

Ellen then piped up. “I guess I need the most help of all. It is so different when you are working lunch as compared to dinner. At dinner with a busboy like Donnie you don’t have to worry about the garlic bread and water. By the way I think water should be a requested item instead of everybody getting one. It’s wasteful, expensive and cuts into other beverage sales. Anyway, back to lunch without a busboy you’re pretty much on your own. Today what Ed did was magic. First, he sat the people, gave them menus and chatted them up. He then got garlic bread and water. When I rang up my order, he went to the drink station and set up my sodas and iced teas. Huge. He helped me bring out my big orders, and he checked out three of my tables and brought back the change and receipt. Any and all of those things help.” Looking at Ed. “What do you call it floating? If you hadn’t been floating I would have been sinking”

Everyone smiled or laughed at the humor.

Donnie showed up saying that both menus will be done in an hour. Ed asked Donnie to interview the three guys waiting in the dining room. Donnie was a bit shocked to be asked to perform such a function. "Go tell me what you think of these guys. Rate them 1, 2, and 3."

Donnie grabbed a soda walked out in the dining room took a seat and called them over one at a time. He was looking at the application while talking to the individual. After about half an hour he came back and reported to Ed. He rated the shy guy first with the guy with the car a close second. He didn't trust the third guy.

Ed asked for his reasoning.

Donnie said "Elery (shy guy) is clearly the smartest and he wants the work bad. I pressed him on talking to people and he said he can talk to folks ok, but he was frightened about the interview. It was his first. The second guy played a lot of sports in school. He understands team. I think he will work out. The third guy looks too clever. He thinks he is smart and wants other people to think so too. I don't trust him."

Ed said, "Dismiss number three and tell 1 and 2 to come back tonight at 5:30 in black and whites. Let's see how they work out. Tonight, it is going to be crowded in here with a bunch of people that currently don't know much. We've got one new server Dorothy, that's for sure. Then we've got the two you just interviewed and the two from a couple days ago. You met them, also, right?"

"Yeah, I know them. I want all four, in groups of two to be exposed and trained in dishwasher/busboy and pizza making. You take pizza and I take bussing. We switch halfway through. Part of the bussing training is use of the computer. Let's see who can do what. I'm hoping to find a capable pie guy and two bus/dishwashers, for tomorrow night. How are you doing with the conveyor?"

"It's great. I build them and put them in. I don't have to pull them off the tray for refiring or take them out. Just in and gone. We're going to need to show everybody how to cut pies."

Ed added almost solemnly, "Yeah, there's going to be lots of training going on tonight."

Ed checked with Harry making sure he was ready to debut his meals this evening. He responded with a thumbs up. Here we go.

Everyone was on deck at 5:30. New folks were introduced all around. Dorothy knew to follow the girls. The guys were broken up into two groups. Donnie took one group to the pizza station and Ed took the other to the kitchen. Ed walked them through the dishwasher quickly. There really wasn't much to learn other than where things go when they are clean. Beyond the obvious you really figure that out as you go. He then showed them the drink station, the garlic bread and salads. Some pies were coming out, so he showed the new guys how to cut everything in 8s. Look at the ticket if it is for the dining room you put it on a pizza tray and put it under the lamp with the ticket sticking out. If it is to go then you put it in a box and write the ticket number on the box and tape one of the new menus to the lid. Ed kept one guy cutting pizzas and folding pizza boxes while he sent the other to the servers to train on bussing. Ed went to work the door to float and observe.

Ed previously had Ellen write on the white board "CHECK OUR NEW MENU ITEMS" Now he displayed that message on the easel in the entranceway. Ed was dressed nicely with a shirt, tie and no jacket. He greeted everyone and ushered them to either the bar or dining room.

The night passed. The new menu items were a hit. Two had not been ordered yet but the others were and received fine reviews. The training went well. Two of the guys could do well at either pizza or bussing. One guy

just bussing and one guy just pizza. Everybody got the computer ok. Dorothy had no problems on the floor. So tomorrow we invite them all back, give Dorothy a station, let Donnie pick his pizza mate and put the other two on dishwasher /bussing. Tonight, there were 11 pickup orders. Tomorrow is going to be huge.

At the end of the night, they had a short meeting and discussed the plans for tomorrow. Ed told the servers again that it was necessary to put the table number on your order. That way if it comes up and you are stuck somewhere else, we can deliver the food while it is still hot and fresh. They went over the table numbers again.

Ed asked, "how did the people like the new items on the menu."

"Great, good, they really liked the meatballs."

Harry was happy.

Ed made a point of telling everyone that the new menus were designed by Ellen, Karen and Donnie to the applause of others. Ed then added, "we need a lunch menu by Monday. We'll limp through tomorrow. We're going to blow the doors off this thing tomorrow so bring me a fresh attitude and a willingness to please our customers."

Ed and Harry had previously made-up minimum inventory levels for all the product paying particular attention to Friday. Basically, Friday was like three other days. They both went through their stock, saw what was on the shelf and made a shopping list for what they needed. I guess we are as planned up as we can get for a Thursday night.

The place got cleaned up and everyone left except Gene and Ed.

"You want a beer?"

"No, give me a VO on the rocks."

"Been that kind of night?"

"No but I expect it is going to be that kind of tomorrow."

Gene looked up, "have faith brother"

Ed stated confidently, "Everybody is doing at least as good if not a whole bunch better than I expected."

"You lead well. You make them feel like they are a big part of the game."

"They are."

Gene continued, "I know but lots of places don't treat their people like that. You inspire them. It's cool to watch."

"I've been watching the sales figures. They have been growing everyday both lunch and dinner. The word is getting out that we are good. If that holds true, we are going to be as busy as a one-armed paper hanger tomorrow."

"What?" Gene asked with a smile.

"It's an old joke my father used to tell. Like a one-legged man in a butt kicking contest. He had a lot of those old chestnuts. Anyway, I figure tomorrow night will be a new record setter, by a lot. I've got the stock. I've got the equipment. I've got the staff that has been pretty well trained, and I've got the system to make it all work. I just

don't know where the wheel is going to fall off."

Gene's wisdom oozed out, "When it does, we'll fix that too"

Gene could tell that Ed was pretty strung out. He thought back to when this whole thing started out with Ed's dad. Jeepers, that guy had no idea of how many skills his son had. Even when he was making the deal, he talked about Ed like he was almost a loser. He really wasn't anxious to meet with the kid but he had promised a sit down. What a surprise. I'm so glad that we are teamed up and moving forward. I'd better give the kid a break and not bother him for a story. God, I love the way the story is unfolding, I just thought we'd be at the land rush by now. I guess you can't rush a rush.

Gene went over to Ed and looked him dead in the eyes, shook his hand and said, "I'm so proud of you. We're going to do great tomorrow and a bunch of tomorrows beyond that. Ed Smiled, said, "Thank you. I'll see you in the morning partner."

While Ed was having a restless night, he was unaware that some others were thinking more than sleeping.

Donnie got home and said hi to mom and dad. Mom asked, "how was work honey?"

Donnie had to pause for a moment before he could reply. Finally, "Mom, I am so happy with my job I just keep waiting for something horrible to happen that will kill it for me."

Dad popped in, "Don't be nervous, just do the best you can and they'll keep you on."

Donnie says, "You don't understand. It's so way better than that. The bosses really like me. They keep giving me more responsibility. Today I interviewed four people seeking jobs. On my say they hired three and let the other go."

Mom's eyes brightened, "wow, they must really like you."

"I know. The money is ok and getting better and they are teaching me everything. I think they are training me to manage"

Dad said, "well son you have always learned fast and you've never been afraid of work. It's great that they noticed that."

"I know dad. It's so good it makes me nervous that I might screw it up."

Mom said softly, "You are going to do just fine."

Dorothy got home and spoke with her fiancé. He asked, "how was it?"

"A lot better than I thought it was going to be. I didn't make much in tips tonight because I was just training but it looks like this is going to be a good job. I talked to the other girls and they said their tips were pretty good and getting better. I get a full station tomorrow night, so I'll know better then. I'll tell you one thing everybody is real nice."

Dorothy remembered her last job. Everything was at least bad, if not worse. The boss was a jerk, the tips were bad, the customers were cheap, even the other waitresses were a pain. So far everything looked better at the Bucket. Ed encouraged other people to use their skills with menu design. I wonder if he will let me do some of my graphic design computer stuff.

Bill asked, "Do you think you can get enough hours?"

"The whole place is changing and for the better. They get more and more customers every day. Yeah, I think I can get the hours I need."

"That would be great, especially if you can work in your classroom hours around it."

"I think they will work with me to make that happen."

Bill said, "Well let's see how tomorrow night works out."

Ellen got home and saw her roommate who immediately asked, "How did they like the menu?"

"Oh my God, they loved it. Uncle Gene couldn't believe that the three of us designed it. He was so happy. We had some new workers tonight and at the meeting with everyone Ed congratulated us on using our skills to make such a great menu. I was almost embarrassed. Actually, it was great doing something good and having everybody know it. Oh, the other thing is they are making changes that make the server job so much easier. They really are nice and the new food is sooo good."

"Wow, sounds like you had a great night."

"Yeah, I did. Tomorrow will be the test. We are going to be super busy with new people serving, bussing and cooking. It could be a nightmare."

"Just keep your head and it will turn out great. How's that foxy new boss of yours?"

"Oh he's foxy and nice but I think he's too busy to even notice me. Plus, I saw the way he looks at the design lady that's helping out."

Harry got home to his wife and family. His son was already in bed. Dorris asked about work.

"It is so good it scares me. They liked all my new items for the menu. This Ed is easy to work with and he listens to any new thing I present. The food is so much better now. We think we are going to get swamped tomorrow and everybody is excited about it. I think it is going to work out great."

"Do you think they will give you any more money?"

"If we keep moving along the way we are I think they will give me a raise. I hope so. Now isn't the time for me to worry about that. I need to keep doing what I'm doing to make the restaurant better. It is so much more fun serving good food and a lot of it."

Doris said, "I know but we could sure use some extra bucks around here."

"Give it a little time."

Elery went home and saw mom.

"How did it go?"

"This has been a good day. It started out rocky. I didn't do too good on my first interview. I was nervous. My second interview went great. They tried me out at three different positions, and I did good. I'm on tomorrow. If I keep doing good I think this job will work out."

"I hope so darling"

Friday morning Gene, Ed and Donnie were all there before 9:00. Harry came in about 9:30. The first thing Ed said to Gene was don't ask for a story until this day is in the rear-view mirror. Gene nodded.

Everybody had stuff to do and they knew what it was. Ed did a last-minute check with Harry to make sure his shopping list had all that Harry needed. Harry oked it.

Donnie asked Ed. "How many dough balls do you want and what size."

This was the first judgment call Ed had to make today. The good news was that if you erred on the long side it was no big problem. We still have Saturday and Sunday. So Ed said, "let's load up with 96 of each"

Donnie said, "Damn, you're planning on rockin' the world tonight"

"Think so."

Ed left to go shopping. Donnie started the flower mixing process. It was interesting that Harry got all of his stuff prepped and without being asked came over and helped Donnie with his third batch.

Lunch came and went with no fanfare. It was the busiest lunch in the history of the restaurant, but everyone was so fired up for the evening crowd that lunch was kind of easy. Ed was floating, helping out in all the spots at one time or another. Donnie and Harry kept up well. Elery was a quick study. He had the bussing thing down well. He kept up on slicing pies. He helped with sodas and salads. Ellen was doing great. Ed had to step in a couple times, primarily in cashing out some tables and with one large order being served. The two plus hours flew by. Ed was talking to a lot of customers and made sure to give them one of the takeout menus. Gene survived lunch on his own. He was happy that Ed checked out Ellen's customers as well as a couple bar customers as well. Ed also made two orders of coffee drinks for Gene that made him particularly happy.

About 2:15 the dining room was empty with a couple tables left to be bussed. The bar still had a pretty good crowd. I think a few folks decided to start their weekend a little early.

Ed gathered everyone except Gene in the kitchen and asked, "what did we learn?"

Harry started with, "I'd like to see the pastas go out the same time as the pizzas but sometimes that doesn't

happen.”

Ellen said, “When we aren’t totally busy I can let the pie or the pasta stay under the lamp until the rest of the order is done. Sometimes I can’t. Especially when the customer is in a hurry.”

Ed said, “good point. It would be great if all of it came out together. The lamps can keep the food fresh for about 5 minutes. We have to serve fresh even if we can’t serve it all at one time. It helps if you take out the pasta and tell the customer that it will be a couple minutes for the pizza. On a related thought for us to work on next week. Can we make a speed menu, for customers in a hurry? Offer it as a special on the menu. Maybe a couple slices and a salad, or a spaghetti and meat sauce and a salad. Maybe include a drink or not. Think about it over the weekend. On bringing all the main dishes out at the same time, do the best you can. Who else?”

Donnie said, “I was humping pies about as fast as I could. If the rest of the weekly lunches start turning out as busy as this Friday lunch, then we will need another guy over here.”

Ed said, “You’re right. I need to start planning accordingly. We are going to have some growing pains as we figure out how busy we are going to be. But I understand and agree.”

Ellen said that the floater position is a god send. Then she added, “maybe you should tell the other servers that they don’t have to check out a customer right away if the cash is right. So, if someone gives you \$24 for a \$19 check he isn’t looking for change. Keep it in your pocket and physically check it out later when we are caught up.” She paused for a second and then said, “We need a credit card processing machine. We shouldn’t need to go to the bar to have Gene ring the card through. Yeah, he needs to cash it out once the customer signs it but running the card we should do.”

Ed said, “I like it, you will have that as soon as I can get it ordered. Anybody else?”

Ellery spoke up. I know I’m the new guy, but I found myself cutting pies, making drinks, making salads, serving garlic bread and clearing tables. When it was really busy, I didn’t know what to do first.”

Ellen chimed in with “Ellery that is a great question. As you do this job you get better at figuring what needs you the most. If pizzas are getting close to falling off the table then that’s where you need to be. Everything else is a judgment call.”

Ed said, “Ellery, that was a great question and Ellen so was the answer. As you work here longer, you’ll figure out what crisis needs your attention first. Stay open and soak it in, you’ll get a better understanding of it as you go along. Ok if there isn’t anything else let’s get cleaned up and ready for tonight. Thanks everybody.”

ED went out to the bar to see Gene. He looked a little frazzled. “Are you ok Gene?”

“Yeah, we were busy. Hell, I’m still busy. Thanks for those coffee drinks by the way, that would have killed me. You checking out most of the tickets helped a ton as well.”

“Gene, have you ever thought about a third guy behind the bar?”

Gene looked up in the air and said, “No, not because I’m against it. We’ve never had the action to warrant it. I think that’s changing right in front of my eyes. I’m picturing tonight, this could be bedlam.”

Ed continued, “I’ve staffed up to accommodate what we think is going to happen here tonight, but we never discussed if you might need another guy out here. Do you know anybody?”

"Actually, I do. A friend of mine's son just got laid off. He sure could use some work. He's a smart kid. By the way this kid is about ten years older than you. I could give him a call to see if he wants a shot at this."

"Give him a call. If he's available, I'd like to get his paperwork started before he goes on shift. Maybe 4:30. I'll take him through the computer stuff. We won't have him check out tickets yet, but he can do everything else."

Gene said, "That would take a little stress off me,"

Ed said, "Make it so number one."

Gene had no idea what Ed was talking about.

Everybody showed up around when they were supposed to. One of the new guys was wearing jeans. Ed called him over. "Do you have any black pants"

"Yes sir."

"Go home and get them."

The new bartender showed up at 4:30 as requested. He filled out his paperwork. Ed asked Karen to show him the computer. He explained to her the difference between bar service as compared to dining room. She understood and carried out the training with no problem. Ed went over the safety issues one more time emphasizing hand washing. He asked them all to check their own fingernails for cleanliness.

Everyone took their stations and the game began. At 5:00 Ed could already tell that they were going to be busy. He motioned people to the bar with a gesture but sat them in the dining room. Dorothy had the bar as her station and Karen and Ellen split the dining room. By 5:45 the dining room was full and the Bucket had its first party in its history that had to wait for a table. They went to the bar and were happy to wait a bit. The bar filled up quickly. Fortunately, it was a cooler night. The new air conditioning isn't in for another week. If the weather would have been hot it would have been uncomfortable inside. Ed was moving through the restaurant quickly checking on everything. The phone began ringing with people ordering pizzas to go. Lots of them. Everybody was busy but for the most part keeping up. Ed knew Harry would be ok. The same for Gene. He was nervous about Donnie and Ellery keeping up on pizzas. He kept checking on Dorothy to make sure she wasn't in over her head. The girls in the dining room were keeping up with the help of the bussers.

By 6:30 half of the dining room was on its second seating. Ed had to help the busboys clear the tables so the new customers could be seated. Ed was "keeping the book" at the door. When a customer checked in to wait for a table Ed noted the time. The longest wait for a table was 32 minutes. Not bad. By 8:45 there was no-longer a waiting list. People were still coming in but there was a table available. Many customers chose to eat in the bar. Ed went to his manager's screen and saw that Dorothy had almost as many patrons as the girls in the dining room. For the most part her only busboy support came from Ed.

Ed knew it was time to start sending extra people home. Ed went to Karen and asked who do you want to send home? It should be at least one server and two bussers.

Karen came back with "I think we should let everybody eat something. Once we've done that then the first server to go home should be Dorothy." She selected two busboys to send home but asked if they could get caught up on dishes first. Harry has a lot of pots and pans that we don't normally have with the old menu.

Ed said great to all of it. He added "I bet there are going to be at least ten more tables to serve. So, let's not

empty our staff too early, but I want you to think about how we are going to let people off at the end of the evening. Some people want to go while others want to stay. I want to be as fair as I can."

Karen understood and appreciated the added responsibility.

Ed took a seat at the end of the bar where he could still see the door in case any new customers showed up. Gene came over with a frosty microbrew and a smile.

"Damn I'm glad we had the third man in here tonight."

"How did Warren do?"

"Good. He made all the coffee drinks. He handled about a third of the bar with Bill taking the rest. I worked service and checked people out. Warren had the computer thing down easy. Have you looked at the numbers so far for tonight?"

"Yeah, we are already ahead of last Friday by 20% and I've still got 25 people in the dining room and what looks like a pretty full bar."

Gene said, "you wouldn't believe how that top shelf booze sold. I couldn't believe it."

Ed took a long pull on his beer and said, "believe it."

Just then a party of 5 walked in the door for dinner. Ed greeted them and took them to a table in the dining room.

Leslie walked into the room. Ed walked over and greeted her with a hug. "What a wonderful surprise. "I was hoping to see you but hadn't figured out when that would happen. I'm glad it's now."

"Did you have a good night?"

"Yeah, better than that. It hasn't sunk in yet."

"What's better?"

"Well, we blew away all sales figures but more importantly our system worked. We gave a ton of people good food with good service. The takeout orders swelled to a spot we have never seen before. All in all it was a great night. The staff did great even the new kids. I'm just looking at the future and it scares me a little."

Leslie said quietly, "Is success bothering you?"

"No, it's just can I keep delivering this success?"

"You know you can. Everyone around you is a believer."

"The part that gets me is that we haven't done the marketing yet. That's about 10 days down the road. I've got to believe that's going to drive the action even further."

Leslie added, "Exciting huh."

"Yeah, it's exciting. Gene is just moving along like an old trooper. He hasn't freaked out yet. Speaking of Gene, what are you doing tomorrow night? Gene told me I have to leave early for mental health reasons. How about a late dinner at my brother's place?"

"Great, what time?"

"Can you meet me here about 9:00?"

"You got it."

"Look I've got to get back in the game. Thanks for coming by and I look forward to seeing you tomorrow night."

"See you then."

Ed went back in the kitchen. Clean up was moving along alright. Ed caught Harry's eye and gave him a smile. God, he came through tonight. Hell, everybody did. Now I've got to get everybody thinking about tomorrow. There were still three tables filled in the lounge with another 7 people at the bar. Ed gave a gesture to Gene who knew it meant time for a meeting. He had already let Aaron go for the evening so he made sure Bill could handle the action, then he proceeded to the dining room.

The first thing Ed noticed was the size of the meeting. There were twice as many people as before. Everybody found a chair and turned to where Ed was standing.

Ed began. "I want to start by thanking all of you for a great night. I think Gene can verify that we have never had this many customers in an evening before. Some of the things that I noticed that excite me are little issues but important. I saw people washing their hands without being asked. On two occasions I saw people mopping wet spots by the dishwasher without being asked. I saw busboys knowing what a server needed and doing it without being asked. I saw one server help another server take out a large order without being asked. That's the kind of teamwork a guy like me gets excited about. Harry, your pastas came out great tonight. Lots of compliments from the customers. Donnie, you and Elery were pounding out the pies tonight, great job. Finally, all you new people; I know we threw you in the deep end of the pool without much instruction but you all did great. Now we're on to tomorrow. For lunch we are going to try it with one server but we are adding a busboy. Tomorrow night we are going to staff like we did tonight. We don't think we are going to be as busy but who knows. Does anyone have anything they want to add?"

Everybody kind of looked around at everybody else seeing if someone was going to say something. Finally, Gene piped in with, "I just want to say thank you for a job well done. You guys are the best?"

Everyone got up to leave. With a point and a nod Harry and Donnie knew that they needed to stay. Ed quickly went over inventory levels needed for tomorrow. They understood and went back to work. Gene looked over at Ed and said, "Well, you did it again sir. When I saw all these people in the house I figured you'd never get them all fed. But you did it. Not only did you get them fed, they loved it. As you said in your meeting you trained all these kids into not only doing their jobs but looking out for others. That's impressive."

Ed agreed, "They did great. Oh by the way, Leslie stopped by to see how we did. She is meeting me here tomorrow night at 9:00. We're going to Henry's for dinner."

"Well done" Gene said with a smile.

Ed asked, "How are your bartenders coming along?"

"Good. Having Warren here let me focus on service bar, cashing out and pickups. The phone kept ringing. Did you see how many to go orders we had tonight? I finally get that part of the business. These folks aren't going out to dinner. They're sitting home watching tv, but they're doing it while eating our food. It's a totally different market

than our restaurant customers.”

Ed said, “Yeah we’re not a night out, we are dinner. I can’t wait until we get our flyer out. Pickup and delivery are almost a business of itself. That is going to kick in big time.”

Gene responds, “Yeah, in time. Now we’ve got nothing new tomorrow other than probably our busiest Saturday ever. Actually, having survived tonight without any visible wounds makes my worries about tomorrow less stressful”.

Ed added, “You know we are actually getting used to being busy. Lots of folks would love to have our problems. But we need to keep hitting the ball. For the next couple weeks, we will be making a bunch of physical changes. Spending money and creating a new image. By the way, have you started on putting that filing system together for what we are spending on improvements?”

“Funny you should ask. I’ve had it together from the day after you asked for it. The only thing I don’t have in the files is your receipts.”

Ed responded, “I bet you’ve been waiting to lay that one on me.”

Gene smiled and said, “Maybe a little. Here look at what I put together. I think it’s organized pretty good. We are keeping to the budget pretty well. We are spending a little less in some areas and a little long in others. All in all we’re doing pretty good. We had a \$500 surprise with the cash register but that was well worth it. I bought one extra tv, but we only went over budget by \$450. Everything else is coming in pretty much on the money.”

Ed, looking over each file and what was written on the outside of each envelope was visibly impressed said, “Damn, you did good on this blue task. I feel better that we aren’t going overboard. Well done sir.”

Gene says, “Hey you aren’t the only guy that can do good here. I’m just happy to be keeping up.”

“You’re doing fine partner, just fine.”

“OK tomorrow I get a story” Gene added.

Ed responded, “ok tomorrow they get back from the honeymoon. But tonight, I’m done. See you in the morning Gene.”

“Good night Ed.”

Morning came quickly. It was the first night that Ed drifted off to sleep without planning something in his mind for the Bucket. He did have a thought or two about Leslie. He was anxious about seeing her tonight. He had breakfast with mom. That was nice. She asked about work and how everyone was doing. Then she asked, “Have you met any nice girls yet?”

How do women know what’s going on in a man’s mind? Ed answered, “actually, I’m going out with a woman after work tonight. I’m taking her to Henry’s”

“Well, that’s wonderful. Tell me about her.”

Ed rambled on how he knew her from high school and how she was helping with interior design at the restaurant. Mom listened and smiled well. She ended the conversation with a “all work and no play” comment followed by a

"I'd love to meet her. Maybe she could come for dinner some time."

Ed smiled and said, "In time mom, In time."

Ed and Gene both pulled up at the Bucket at 9:15. Exchanged greetings and then Gene said, "here we go again partner."

"Yeah, I guess I should be more nervous but for some reason I'm not."

"I know, same with me. It's no time to get overconfident but I figure if we made it through last night, we should be able to do it again."

Ed added, "Every morning I've come to work with a list in my head of things I absolutely have to get done. Today, I've got everything in place and all I have to do is make sure that everyone else is up on their tasks. It's weird."

Gene broke out that little smile of his and said, "It's the way it's supposed to be. We need to keep our planning going on but the actual operations should just happen by itself. Besides, that gives me a right for another story".

Ed poured a coffee for Gene and himself and sat down with a "OK it's story time."

Foster and Sarah enjoyed their long ride back home. Even when they weren't talking to each other they reveled in each other's company. A lot of time was spent talking or dreaming of moving West. Foster told the story of his meeting with William the engineer and being invited to come to his office and see the plans for the sewer and water plans for the city. He then mentioned that knowing where the sewers are going could yield an opportunity to buy land and sell it for a profit because only lots on a sewer line could be built upon.

Sarah responded, "Isn't that risky or maybe illegal?"

"Well, it's certainly not illegal. I don't think it's risky because if you buy in the right place somebody is going to want to build there, maybe even me."

Sarah's face drained a little as she said, "Are you thinking about building a house for us or one to sell. Doesn't that require a lot of money?"

Foster replied, "We can't afford to build our house yet, but we might be able to build one that could triple our money in a year. That would get us close to having enough to handle our dream."

Sarah looked confused. "How can you afford to build one for somebody else? I don't understand."

Foster responded "Partners. I know Luke is looking to move up from builder to the man that sells the house and makes the real money. I bet if I found the right site with sewer and water and showed Luke I bet he would be willing to put his money with mine to make it happen. He always said after Mr. Dobbs left after an inspection how that guy really made the money. He likes me. I bet we could do it."

Sarah then added, "If you are going to take such a risk, I think we should look hard at moving in with Aunt Helen."

"Maybe you're right." He paused and then said again, "maybe you're right."

It was early Sunday evening when they arrived at the store. Aunt Helen had expected them and was waiting to hear all about Niagara Falls. The three of them chatted for over an hour with tales of the Falls, rapids, and especially Goat Island. They gave Helen her gift. She was thrilled and immediately made a place of honor on her shelf in the parlor. As the excitement slowed down Helen then announced, "Foster you have a letter"

As she ran to the kitchen to retrieve it Foster questioned, "A letter. I've never received a letter before. From whom?"

"It's from a lawyer in Ireland. It took over four months to find you. This is exciting, open it up."

As Foster was opening the letter he said, "I was born in Ireland, but I don't know anyone there." He was silently reading the mail as the ladies looked on in suspense.

Finally, he said, "I have an Uncle in Ireland. Actually, I had an uncle, but he died."

Both women gave a comforting sigh of "Oh too bad" Then Foster continued. It appears I am the last living relative, so I inherit his estate. It appears to have a value of 2,700 pounds."

Sarah asked, "Pounds of what?"

Helen offered, "No honey a pound is English money. I don't know what a pound is worth. How would we find out?"

Foster said, "Well tomorrow I could go to the bank. They'd know. A pound is probably a penny, but that's ok. That would be \$270. We could use that."

Sarah then said "I can't wait until tomorrow. Aunt Helen, you know Mrs. Madison from the store. She has lots of family in England. I bet she would know what a pound is worth. She lives just down the street. Do you think it would be alright for me to ask her now?"

Helen said, "Aren't you the anxious one. Yes, it would be alright, she is a nice lady."

Sarah immediately grabbed Foster by the hand and said, "Let's go."

They almost ran down the street to the home of Mrs. Madison knocked on the door and waited. Mrs. Madison came to the door and greeted them. She remembered Sarah from the store. Sarah then asked, "Would you mind telling me the value of a pound in our money?"

"Certainly dear, it's about five to one."

Foster figured, 5 to 1 means each one is worth twenty cents. He was thrilled as he multiplied numbers in his head to yield \$1,350. With this money he could definitely buy a lot and build a house for sale. After that they would almost have enough money to live out their dream of moving West. Sarah was doing the same calculation in her head. She just had different plans for the money. She felt confident that they would find the right way to advance their plans.

Mrs. Madison then added, "You really need to check with the bank in the morning. The value changes from time to time. I've seen it as low as four and a half and sometimes as high as \$7 for a pound".

Sarah didn't catch it but Foster certainly did as he asked Mrs. Madison, "Do you mean \$5 for every pound?"

"Yes, but as I say it fluctuates a little."

Sarah finally caught on. She looked at Foster and quietly said "do you know how much that means?"

Foster was desperately trying not to scream as he quietly said, "Yes, it is over \$13,000."

They both quickly thanked Mrs. Madison as they went outside. They took a couple steps down the road and finally grabbed each other screaming and jumping like little kids. It took a while but they started to look around to see if anybody was watching their shameful display of joy. Then they collectively decided they didn't care if people watched on. They kept jumping and hugging and jumping and kissing,,, Finally they slowed down enough to catch their breath. Sarah was first to speak.

"We can do anything we want. I don't believe this. I guess we have to figure out what we are going to do."

After catching his breath Foster said, "Well we've been talking about moving West. We've been talking about building our own house. I've been thinking about getting my own crew like Luke and doing what he does for more money, and just lately I've been talking about using my knowledge about sewer and water to buy land to either sell or build on."

Sarah was wiping tears of joy from her cheeks as she said, "Well we don't need to decide anything right away"

Foster said, "The letter said that I need to sign and return the letter and that they would get me a letter that I would take to the First National Bank to pick up my inheritance. I bet that's going to take months. Look how long it took for this letter to arrive."

Sarah said, "Yeah but now they know where you are. But it will take some time. No matter what, we are in a better place today than yesterday."

"Yeah, and yesterday was terrific."

As they walked back to tell Aunt Helen, they kept chattering about all the things they could do with the money. Many ideas kept springing to light. Then there was a pause as Sarah asked.

"Who gave you this money?"

"My Uncle Liam. Remember I was three years old when we left Ireland for America. I can almost picture him but not really. What I can remember were the stories my mom and dad would share about the old country. Times were tough even for my father who had a skill. They talked about their parents and losing them to disease when they were still young. My mother didn't have any family that she spoke of. My father had his brother Liam. The two of them owned the family farm. I guess it wasn't worth much. Finally, my dad decided to immigrate, and he tried his best in talking his brother into joining he and my mom. Liam wouldn't budge. Even after we moved to Buffalo and dad had settled into a good trade he tried to convince Liam to join them but Liam loved Ireland and wouldn't leave. We would get a letter or two every year telling stories of our old town. I remember mom and dad talking about their old life and asking if they had any regrets about moving to America. It always ended the same way with I love Ireland, but Buffalo is my home."

Foster paused for a second and had a drink of wine that Aunty Helen was happy to serve for this celebration and then said, "I remember Dad saying that his brother was never married, so I guess I'm the only family he had at the end".

Sarah then said, "Isn't it ironic..." Foster quickly thought that he had no idea what ironic meant, "that your parents moved west and couldn't convince your uncle and that your uncle is the means to make you move West again" Now Foster understood it meant funny in a weird way.

Aunt Helen quickly added, "You know that you have the means to move doesn't mean you have to".

Sarah answered, "We know but now we can actually look at it as something more than a dream."

Foster kept silent. He knew that Aunt Helen would respect their decision to move but would be a lot happier if they decided to stay in Buffalo. We'll see. Foster then thought that it would be a good idea to accept Aunt Helen's suggestion to move in over the store. Sarah saw what Foster was doing and smiled at his feelings for Helen. With that subject broached Foster took a tour of what was going to be his new home. He recommended building some shelves in what was now Sarah's room to better stock the inventory. Until then Sarah and Foster would live at Foster's place.

Ed repositioned himself in the chair, looked at Gene and said, "So how do you like that story?"

"Well, it answers the question of how they could afford to do the land rush thing. What a windfall. That must have been a huge amount of money back then."

Ed responded, "That's what created the dilemma. Before they knew down deep, they didn't have enough money to make the trip so they just dreamed about it. They didn't have enough money for Foster to get his own crew but they dreamed about it, they knew they didn't have enough money for Foster to build them their own home but they dreamed about it and they certainly didn't have enough money for Foster to be a land speculator or developer...and now they can do any of those things. It gets hard when you have choices. The good news was that nothing was going to happen for some number of months while waiting for the money to arrive."

Harry and Donnie were walking in the back door. Gene looked at Ed and said, "Yeah, I know let's get back to running a business."

Ed had a quick meeting with Harry and Donnie to make sure they were ready for lunch and dinner. He asked what concerns they had. Everybody seemed up and ready. He remembered he had to check with Gene on having everything we need for the ceiling tile painting on Monday. He looked over his calendar and checked the items in red. He came up with a short list.

First, call Pauli about the building permit. He made the call. Pauli is such a good guy. He reassured Ed that the permit would be issued next week and that he had his guys scheduled to do the work. Most of the work could be done while the restaurant was open. The exception was the johns. He thought the Monday would be the best time to close down the johns for remodeling. That worked because that would be the same day as the interior painting. Pauli asked Ed to get a spray can of paint and mark out the area for the new landscaping. It's a nothing job that would happen at the completion of some other job. If it was marked out his guy could come in any time and within a couple hours the pavement would be removed and carried away.

Second on his list was calling his landscape friend and bringing him up to date with the timing. He called and talked it out. Ed needed to call him when he knew for sure when the pavement removal was being done. He said he would swing by later today to check out the size of the marked off area so he could compute how much fill he needed.

Third was calling Henry's place to make a reservation. When he called he got Bruce the day manager. They had worked together before so they exchanged pleasantries. Bruce said, "Hey your brother has been bragging about you. He says you are really hitting the ball down there. I told my wife who wants to come down for dinner."

Ed responded, "Well I haven't screwed it up yet but there is still time. Actually, I'm really happy on how it is coming along. The reason I'm calling is to make a dinner reservation for tonight at 9:30."

Bruce asked, "How many?"

"Just two. I need to eat someone else's food for a change. You're the best in town."

"Nice of you to remember."

Ed added, "Hey you never forget your roots."

Bruce was talking to someone else and then said, "Your brother wants to talk to you, hang on." Phone went to hold and then was quickly picked up by Henry. "How's it going?"

"I keep waiting for the other shoe to drop. So far it has all been working great. I might add, your help has been a strong contributor to it working."

"Well, I'm a little late but I'm glad I can finally help. So, you're coming to dinner. What's the occasion?"

Ed began, "Well Gene is driving me out of the restaurant because he thinks there is something wrong with a 114 hour work week. My guest is Leslie a friend of mine from high school who has interior design skills. She has volunteered to help with our new look. Oh yeah, I think I like her too."

"Excellent little brother. You can't be accused of fishing off the company dock when she is a volunteer. Excellent. By the way have you called the Trib yet?"

"No, not yet. I was going to survive this weekend before I brought more attention on us. Henry you should see the action were getting. Last night we had a wait list for tables and we served 18 to go orders. We really haven't told anybody anything yet. I've worked out all the systems that you taught me and they are working. We're cross training staff. It all seems to be working. One thing I know for sure is that my partner can't believe it."

Henry added, "You've got a good partner there. He's solid and honest. He really likes working with you."

"I agree but how would you know that?"

"I know everything little brother. Actually, we have some of the same customers. A couple have reported to me how well you are doing and how Gene raves about you. You're making me proud brother."

"Thanks Henry. That means a lot coming from you. Hey if you are around tonight come by and let me introduce Leslie. I think you'll like her."

"If she likes you, I know I'll like her. See you tonight."

As Ed hung up the phone he thought how great it was to finally have a big brother. OK here comes the lunch crowd. It was a new normal busy, more than twice the business as before. We had two mistakes and both were done by pros. Ellen ordered the wrong size pizza for one of her parties and Gene mixed up two checks and gave the customers the wrong change. When Ellen gave her customer the wrong change he noticed it. She

immediately went to the other customer and switched everything. The wrong size pizza thing became a learning opportunity.

Ellen carried out a small pie to a customer that ordered a large pie. When she saw what she did she called Ed over. Ed asked Ellen to go to the kitchen and tell Donnie to fast track another small pie. He noticed there was a teenager in the party. While he explained the mistake and that it was being taken care of to their advantage he asked the young person, "Are you any good at math?" The young man responded with a "sort of"

Ed continued, "OK, listen carefully, how much more pi is there in 2 small pizzas as compared to one large pizza?"

Mom answered quickly, "There are 8 more pieces"

Ed responded, "That's not the question. How much more pi is there in two smalls as compared to one large."

The young man had it. He just needed to do the math in his head. Finally he said "According to your menu the small pie is 12" and the large is 16". The area of a circle is πr^2 . So the radius 6 squared is 36 but you have two pizza so you have 72 pi. The large pizza radius is 8" so that squared is 64. So the answer is there is 8 more pi without an e in the two smalls.

Ed had been smiling as the young man was solving the problem. His mom was wowed. Ellen had a grin, wondering if she would ever have the nerve to try that on a customer. Ed broke in again and said, "Because you are smart we aren't going to charge you for any pizza big or small." He nodded to Ellen who knew how to change the bill.

Lunch closed out. Ed went over some paperwork and then got ready for dinner. Everyone showed up on time and in uniform. The first dinner customer arrived at 4:30. And then it began. By 6:00 the dining room was full with 4 tables waiting in the bar. The bar was full with all the other tables filled with either bar or bar and dinner customers. All cylinders kept firing for the next three hours. There were three large parties of 8, 10 and 10. Those require moving tables together to seat everyone. One group of 10 finally suggested that they could be split if it made for an earlier seating. It did.

Just after 9:00 the last table waiting was seated. Ed called over the busboys and said, ok don't slow down yet. Get me a couple four tops and a couple deuces ready for walk ins. They understood and complied. During the hurricane Ed had checked on Harry and Donnie a couple times. They were holding up well. Gene was keeping up on the service bar and cashing out tickets. Ed had trained Elery to answer the phone and process to go orders. Ed covered most of the phone action, but Elery stepped in on about 6 orders. Finally a lull. Everybody needed it.

Just then Leslie walked in looking so fresh and beautiful. "Hello. Should I ask?"

"If you are asking if I survived the answer is barely. If you are asking if we were busy, the answer is oh yeah. If you are asking if I am ready to get out of here and have a great steak the answer is emotionally yes, but physically almost."

She smiled, "Howe about if I have a drink at the bar while you finish up?"

"Thank you"

Gene saw Leslie and quickly prepared a position of honor at the bar. To do so he pushed a couple old regulars down a little. As she sat he said, "Well your boy did it again tonight. You know it's one thing to think this up but

it's a whole other ball game to get everyone recruited and trained. Oh, then you've got the easy part of managing a restaurant bulging with customers. He kept smiling at the customers while rooting on the staff. He makes it look easy."

Leslie answered, "Yeah, I think he's a special guy"

Gene interrupted the conversation when a party of four showed up at the door. He seated them. Ed was in the kitchen meeting with Harry, Donnie and Karen.

He said, "Look, Gene has thrown me out of here to take Leslie to dinner. Thanks for a great evening. Go through your regular closing procedures and check your inventories for tomorrow. Karen, we can open with one server and one busboy but I think we need a second server at about 3:30. Donnie same with you, have Elery come in about the same time to help with pizzas. I'll be here in the morning. Does anybody have any questions?"

Donnie said, "What are you having for dinner?"

All laughed. Harry broke in, "Take it easy Ed, we've got this. Enjoy your evening."

Karen said in a lighthearted way, "Get out of here and let us do what you've trained us to do. Have fun."

Ed smiled as he thought, God these guys are great. Then he said, "OK, I'm history, if you have any questions ask Gene." With that he grabbed a clean shirt he had brought with him, washed up and changed. He went out to the bar to meet his date.

CHAPTER 14 PLANNING

TO MOVE WEST – DINNER AT HENRY'S

Ed said, "God you look good. We've got a little time do you mind if I have a drink before we push on?"

"Hey, I'm already having fun. Take your time." Leslie said,

Gene was walking over with a VO on the rocks already poured for Ed. He said, "I can't think of anybody more deserving of a great meal in the company of a beautiful woman."

"Thanks Gene. You're certainly right about the beautiful woman part. Isn't she gorgeous?"

"You guys are way too kind. But don't ever stop. My ego can always use some bolstering."

Gene looking at Ed, "Well, last night was the busiest we have ever been. I just looked at the numbers and we've already topped that with all these people to check out yet. You're a miracle worker partner."

Ed responded, "God the kids did great tonight. They are as interested in making this bucket shine as we are. Remember we have a whole other gear to shift to once we start marketing and kick off the delivery business".

Leslie looked at both men and said, "This is so much fun watching you guys. You're doing so good you haven't even noticed how hard you're working. This is special."

ED finished his drink and asked Leslie if she was ready to go. He further asked if she could drive because his truck was a mess on the inside. She said yes and off they went.

They walked into Henry's and were greeted by a young hostess that Ed had never met. When Ed gave her the name for the reservation, he noticed that she reacted as she checked off the name. Obviously, there was some notation next to the name signaling that it was the boss's brother. They were whisked to their table.

People look at the same thing in different ways. Leslie looked around the room and noticed the color scheme. The carpeting blended in with the wall coverings that were accented with quality paintings. The lighting was beautiful. Each of the paintings had its own lighting treatment. Most of the illumination came from indirect lighting around the perimeter of the room. There were some recessed can lighting fixtures that were rheostatically controlled for the right effect for the changing natural light. The window treatments were perfect. The quality of the drapes was top shelf. She knew they had an extensive budget to decorate this room. She loved it.

ED looked around the room and made mental note of where the bussing station was and what went on there. Although screened from the dining room he could tell that the bread warmer was there along with water and ice. There was a tray stand that serviced half of the dining room for landing with fresh food and clearing dishes into bus buckets. From the bussing station there was double door access to the kitchen. Ed knew there was another double door leading from this station to the service bar. The customer never had to look at or better yet listen to the workings of the staff because of this screening.

The table they sat at was suitable for a party of four. They took seats adjacent to each other as compared to across. The table setting was beautiful with quality silverware, linen napkins and a real candle. It was all luxurious. The menu selections were intentionally minimal. Ed remembered when he was a kid and Henry took over the restaurant that the decision was made to offer fewer items but only the highest quality. They served Filet Mignon, New York Strip, Lobster Tails, Lobster Dainties, and a deep-fried half chicken primarily for the kids. Surf and Turf can be ordered with either steak and either lobster. Ed knew it was all excellent.

Just before they arrived at the table the busboy had delivered ice water, butter on individual plates and hot homemade rolls. Barb, the server came over and said, "Hi Ed, do you remember me?"

"Certainly, Barb how are you.?"

"I'm doing great but not as good as you I hear. People are talking about your place. I'm so proud of you."

Ed introduced Barb to Leslie. Barb then asked, "Would you like something from the bar?"

Ed looked at Leslie and said, "What would you like to drink. If you like anything fancy this is the place to order it. At my place if you ask for something along those lines Gene will be getting out the OLD MR. BOSTON book. "

Leslie smiled and said, "I'm not much into fancy. I'll have a bourbon on the rocks."

Ed said, "I'll have VO the same way. Barb, I need a favor. I really don't want my brother to comp this meal. After you turn in our dinner order would you run my card so I can pay before Henry has a chance to grab the check."

Barb said, "I understand but you know I work here, and he's my boss. I'll try."

She came back with the drinks that were clearly over poured on purpose. As Ed lifted his glass for a toast he said, "I don't think we'll need a second one of these"

Leslie had also noticed the triple shot plus serving and nodded her head in agreement. She then said, “everything on the menu looks great, do you know what you want yet?”

“Yep, I’m having surf and turf with NY Strip and Lobster tail”

Leslie said, “that sounds great I’ll do the same.”

Ed then suggested, “Do you want to split a shrimp cocktail? They are really good here but I don’t think I can eat a whole one and still eat my dinner. And how about a nice Merlot with dinner?”

“Yes, on both counts.”

Barb came over, took their order and left.

Ed took a sip of his drink, looked over at Leslie and said, “Here’s my wish for tonight. I want to have a great meal with great company and not talk about the restaurant for the whole evening.”

Leslie looked back and said, “Promise. Besides, I have something I want to talk about. OK?”

Various thoughts went through Ed’s mind as to what she wants to talk about but he said, “Deal”

“The Book”

ED leans back in his chair with almost a smile on his face and then says, “You know I love my partner but sometimes he has a big mouth. OK, what do you know about the book?”

Leslie’s eyes brightened and said, “Nothing, but I want to. You’re writing a book?”

“Yeah. It’s the only way that Gene would make the deal on the restaurant. When we first got together Gene asked me about my family’s history here. I told him a little story and then mistakenly said that I wrote this paper as my senior theses on the History of the land that my Great grandfather got in the land rush. Gene got addicted.”

Just then the shrimp cocktail arrived. God, it looked good. Not only the huge shrimp but the bowl they came in with lemon wedges on a bed of romaine lettuce with cocktail sauce. As they each grabbed a shrimp Ed could tell that Leslie wasn’t going to leave this subject alone.

Leslie looked over at Ed and said nothing. This particular nothing was an obvious request for Ed to keep talking about the book. Ed told the Indian story as he had with Gene. This time he included gestures of firing arrows up to the top of the rock and down from it. He looked around and noticed that a couple at the next table were looking on trying to figure out what he was saying. It was a little embarrassing but made Leslie smile. He then gave a brief summation of the various stories that tracked his ancestors from Buffalo, New York up to the present.

Ed was able to take a break because the meals arrived. Each plate was displayed beautifully to include a separate butter warmer with a tea candle underneath to keep it warm. It really is impressive. Barb then presented the wine. Ed quickly motioned for her to serve without any of the machinations of wine service. Barb left and the couple dug in.

Leslie was first to break the munching silence with a “My God this is good,”

“I tell you my brother knows how. The lobster is great and my steak is just how I like it. How’s yours?”

“Perfect and juicy. Just because the food is great don’t think I’m going to let you off the book hook.”

Ed said, “OK, but I can eat, right?”

“Yes, you can even talk with your mouth full if you like”

ED had taken her briefly through most of the stories, but he knew he had to further explain three things. He began, “Here are a couple unique things you need to know to understand what is going on here. First is the story of my father.”

It took most of the meal to recount how his dad had hustled Gene and Mrs. Martinez by not disclosing that he had a deal in his pocket when he assembled the land necessary to build a movie multiplex. He further explained how his father hocked all his other holdings to control the deal and how Mrs. Martinez outsmarted him by bringing in the State Environmentalist to kill the deal because of two nesting owl families. In the end Dad killed himself. When the dust settled Ed owned the restaurant with Gene holding a mortgage.

“God that sounds like a book in itself. So, you met with Gene and decided to do a total change over and own it as partners, right?”

“Yeah, almost. Gene put his own spin on the deal. He liked all my stories and thought they were worthy of making a book. So he proposed a joint venture on the restaurant along with a joint venture on the book”.

Leslie had been hanging on every word. She knew it was her turn to say something but didn’t really know where to start. Finally, she said, “I’m sorry to hear about your dad. I read about it in the papers but never really knew how it all happened. Now I understand. You know I’m impressed with you. If not you haven’t been catching my signals. I have always liked Gene, but I have just developed even a higher opinion of your partner for being smart enough to force you in to writing this book.”

Amidst all the conversation both Leslie and Ed had finished their plates. Ed served the last of the wine. Barb came over as the busboy was clearing the dishes. She then crumbed the table. You know you have a quality server when they are there when they are needed but not hovering. Fine dining is a lost art. One symbol of same is taking the towel that they always have on them and removing crumbs and other debris from the table.

Barb then said, “Would you care for a dessert? We have some excellent choices. Perhaps coffee or an after-dinner drink”.

Ed motioned to Leslie who said, “I’ll have a decaf with cream and a brandy please.”

Ed said, “Make hers a Henesey, I’ll have a black regular coffee and the same brandy”

They finished off the wine as the coffee and drinks arrived. Leslie was looking at Ed with “Puppy dog” eyes. Ed thought, it’s just like Gene silently begging for a story. Ed began. “So, you know the basic story of the book but in actuality that part is less than half of the book.”

“I don’t understand.”

“You know how in books and even movies there is a flash back to other times and events.” Leslie was nodding. “Well with this writing the story is now, with Gene and I changing the restaurant. I write the dialogue between Gene and myself doing all the things we have been doing and will continue to do. But each day Gene begs for a story. That part is true by the way. And almost every day between buying equipment, hiring contractors, creating

menus, training staff, all of it...I tell Gene a story. But all of it gets written down, the here and now with a flashback to the past. Gene keeps asking for the story of the Land Rush. I'm, or better put my Great grandfather is still in Buffalo. There're at least three more stories before the Land Rush. There're probably five more stories after that tracking my family all the way up to today. It's a risky style of writing. I don't know if it is going to work."

Leslie jumped in with a "Are you kidding me. It's going to work. From what little you have shared your historical stories are really interesting. What you are doing now is flat out exciting. I think blending the two is genius."

Ed paused for a second and then said, "I should probably tell you that you are in it. I can change your name if you insist but I'd rather not."

"I'm in it. "How did I get in it?"

Ed answered, "Your design work at the Bucket to include your color selections. Everything. Hell this dinner is going to be in it. "

Leslie shrugged her shoulders a little bit and said, "This dinner is going to be in it? Does everything have to be in it?"

Ed noticed her expression went a little coy so he added, "I'm hoping to have something that needs to be censored out"

"That just might be the case"

Henry walked over to the table to say hello. Ed introduced him to Leslie who quickly raved on about the food and service. Henry then looked at Ed and said, "You beat me to the punch on that check of yours."

"Hey, you've got to be quick to beat the big dog. I agree with Leslie the meal was amazing. You know how brother."

Henry added, "Well after a while we should have this down. They let you escape tonight."

Ed said, "Hell, they threw me out. They are afraid I'm getting one dimensional. It does feel good being on this side of food delivery. You should come down and let me and mine serve you"

"I'm planning on it. I have to get back to the salt mine. Say hi to mom for me,"

Ed nodded as Henry said goodbye to Leslie and left.

They knew it was time to leave so Ed tipped Barb handsomely took Leslie by the hand and walked to the car.

The next morning Leslie dropped Ed off at the Bucket.

Ed was kind of hoping he would have beat Gene in to work. Oh well it was worth it. Now he had to listen to Gene ask about last night. Gene being the gentleman that he is kept the questions simple like How was your meal, Did it feel good to be out for a change. He didn't say anything about Ed's truck being at the bucket all night. They soon got into business talk.

Gene said, "We finished out strong last night. We had three more parties in the dining room, a couple pizzas at the

bar and two more pick up orders. We're setting a new milestone every night."

"There are worse problems to have. How are you set for today?"

Gene answered, "I'll be ok, but I'm glad I get all my deliveries on Tuesday. Remember tomorrow is ceiling day. I went over my shopping list with Leslie last night. I'm glad Home Depot is open on Sunday. I called my order in. I can go pick it up after lunch."

Ed asked, "Do you want me to go get it. Donnie and Harry both left me a note. They are both set up for today. I really don't have anything pressing for a while."

"Actually, I'm not doing anything big either. I'll go. A little drive sounds nice. I'll be back well before dinner."

"Take my truck it's easier to load".

"Cool." Gene left.

Ed called Leslie. "Thank you for a beautiful evening. What a wonderful break from my normal life."

"If I remember correctly. I think I had a wonderful time also. How's work?"

Ed answered, "This is weird. Gene and I both came in with nothing special that had to be done today. That's a first."

"Well don't get used to it. I am aware of lots of red and blue tasks on that list of yours".

"I know but they don't need to be done today. Well actually Gene is going over to pick up the supplies for "Ceiling Monday""

Leslie asked, "Is it ok if I stop over after work tomorrow to see how you're doing?"

"You're welcome here anytime. You might end up with a paint roller in your hand, but you're welcome."

Leslie answered with a light smile in her voice, "You are so kind. I bet you'll be done by the time I get there. But I'll risk it."

Ed went a little serious, "I need you to know that talking to you lifts my spirits. Feel free to call when you want."

"OK, I pretty much know what hours have you storming hard. I can call around them."

"That would be great"

Gene had just pulled up with a truck load of materials for ceiling painting. It's time to get back to work. Ed went out and asked, "did you get it all?"

"Yeah, I went over Leslie's notes and have it pretty well pictured in my mind how it is gonna' work. If there are four of us it should go ok. I'm putting it all in the shed until tomorrow."

Ed smiled and said, "I'm anxious to see how it is going to look."

"Me too. Everybody set for lunch?"

"All we need is the customers, and I think they will be here."

Gene began to address the troops, "Let me start out by saying how proud I am of everyone. We have made a full transformation of the Bucket. Next week we start on shining it up. As you know tomorrow, we are painting out all the ceilings. Next Monday we will be painting, papering and decorating the dining room. While that is going on the contractor will be in here making our johns and entrance handicap accessible. In the midst of all that we will be creating a landscape island out front. To make sure we don't get bored we will be painting the whole outside and dressing up the front."

Ed looked out and saw various looks coming from the ranks. Donnie, Ellen and Karen looked excited. Harry looked concerned and Gene looked terrified. Ed continued, "I know it sounds like a lot but when you break it down it's not that bad. We're going to get our beaks wet with the ceiling painting tomorrow. We'll see how well we work together on that. Assuming we survive that ok then the next Monday we tackle the dining room. My Uncle Paul is the contractor that is doing the johns and entrance. The ladies' room is staying pretty much the same just moving some plumbing around. The men's room needs to be expanded to accommodate the handicap john. I'm putting off the outside painting for a while. The landscape isle might move forward because it depends on when the contractor fits us in for the removal of the black top."

Everyone was on board. Gene still had the look of freight on his face. Ed thought he better wait until he was a little further down the line before he talked about increasing sales by another third.

"OK let's get ready to make our customers happy. Any questions?"

Ellen and Karen were talking to each other when finally Karen asked, "Why can't we help with the painting, or is this some kind of guy thing?"

Harry jumped in with, "Hey, I wasn't invited either? "

Gene jumped in with, "OK, I'll have coffee and doughnuts here at 9:00. You are all invited." He couldn't believe it.

The meeting broke as everyone moved on to their tasks. You could tell they were excited about what is coming down the road. Donnie, Karen and Ellen were talking about who would train what new guy at what skill. Gene looked over at Ed and said, "You are a rain maker son."

Ed had heard the expression before but never really knew what it meant. Now he got it.

Gene continued, "I don't believe how you got those kids fired up. They were pissed that they weren't invited to work on their day off. They really want to be part of this. Amazing."

"I left the second half off."

The smile almost left Gene's face as he said, "Second half of what?"

"Our weeknights are going to be as busy as our current Friday and our weekends will increase by a third."

Gene looked up like he had just seen an accident. He paused, said, "shit" then paused again and then said, "I'm having a beer do you want one?"

Ed nodded. Gene came back with the beers and said, "You're not kidding, huh."

"I don't see how we can stop it."

Gene took a long pull on his beer and said, "Friday and Saturday we were so busy. Let's say you can drum up more business, because I think you can, but how in the hell can we handle it? I need more than a have faith answer."

Ed smiled, "I've been working on it. We have already done a lot in making our systems work better. There is a bunch more we can do. It is all about staffing and prep. I've looked at each station and figured out what would be the perfect staffing if we were totally slammed. Bar full, dining room full, people waiting, phones ringing kind of slammed. And let's say that went for four hours before it let up."

Gene said, "You're scaring me kid."

Ed responded, "Hey that's not the hard part. On one end of the scale, you've got hair on fire busy and the other you have a slow lunch. We need to do both and everything in between. What's the first thing we need?"

Gene smiled, shook his head and said, "cross training. That's why you did that earlier. You are planting the seed that everyone needs to know everything for when we don't have every position filled to the max. People have to know how to move back and forth. You are amazing."

Ed added, "I know one change we are going to make by next weekend that you are going to like, a second check out register in the kitchen. You will still get some at the bar, but I bet 70% of all checks will be cashed out in the back."

"Bless you my son." Gene then asked, "Do I want to know how you are dragging in all this new business?"

"You already know most of it. I've been holding off on the newspaper thing until we have made some physical changes to the outside. In about two weeks we will be ready to make a splash. We'll work that into our flyer campaign as we said before. The only new marketing gig is football."

"Football?"

"Yeah, we are in pre-season now and most people don't care much but the season is just three weeks away. College ball starts up at the same time. We need to make the local world know that they can come in and enjoy the games on our big screen TVs or watch at home. Either way the game is better with a 'Shiny Bucket' pizza."

Gene said "Jesus" and took another drink. "You just keep coming up with this stuff."

"Hey I didn't invent football. We just got lucky on the timing of the season. If we can get them in for football, then they know how to get here for baseball, basketball and all the rest. We're going to need a special. Work your beer guys for something good to offer. I'll put together a pie special."

"Got it, blue task underway. They were going to give me some football promotional stuff anyway. Schedules. I'll check in again to make sure they don't forget about us. Why didn't you share this with the troops at the meeting?"

Ed paused and then said, "I thought I'd spoon feed them through the improvements thing. Next week will be soon enough to show them the blue sky."

"Blue sky? I don't know if I'd call it that. This might sound stupid, but do we really want to be that busy? I mean is it like mountains, there so you climb it?"

Ed chuckled and then said, "You know I've actually thought about that. It's kind of like taking a new car out on the freeway. You really want to see what she can do. Once you know you don't have to drive that fast in the future but it's good to know you can. Right now we have very little competition in our particular market. That will change. I think we need to gather as many loyal customers as we can while we can. It's easy to slow down. Sometime between ceiling tiles tomorrow I want to show you some tricks on the computer. Let me give you a glimpse. I can pull up how many pizzas of what size and type we sold by hour by day. Same with pastas, beer, everything. I've been using that info to know how many dough balls to make each day. Because we have been on a constant increase the data isn't as good as it will be when we have more days to analyze and business settles into some regularity. Anyway, to get back to your question, initially at least I think we should push this puppy and make her run hard."

Gene responded, "You know when we started this thing, I had lots of visions of problems that we would need to work through. This wasn't one of them. Hey, we've got about a half hour before it all begins again." He asked the question without asking the question.

"Ok, a quick one. We last talked about Foster and Sarah as they inherited enough money to do almost anything they wanted. Foster went to the bank after work to explain his good fortune. He verified that after conversion and fees it would be more than \$13,000. The banker had done transactions like this before and estimated it would take a little more than a month.

Foster and Sarah had agreed not to tell anyone of their inheritance until it arrived, and maybe not then. Sarah had said that people shouldn't know personal information like this. Foster understood but found it hard not to share his good news with his friends. He didn't really tell Luke, but he did involve himself in a conversation about money.

During the lunch break Foster asked Luke about Mr. Dobbs. "How much money does he need to build a house and how well does he do when he sells it?"

Foster was a little worried that Luke would think he was being too nosey. He was quite giving with the information. You could tell that he had thought about building his own like Mr. Dobbs because he had the numbers pretty well worked out. He said, "It depends if you borrow money or not. If you are doing it with all your own money you need over \$4,000 before you get some money from the buyer of the home. If you already have the buyer you can do it for about half of that. The problem is if you build it and nobody buys it."

"Has that ever happened?"

Luke said, "Not that I've seen. You need to pick the right vacant lot and build the kind of house that people want. If I had a home buyer, I'd build one. I've got enough money for that. Building without one is more than I can muster."

Foster then told him about what he learned from the engineer in Niagara Falls. Specifically, about lot selection with sewer and water lines. He continued explaining the whole process with hot and cold water and water closet.

Luke hung on every word. Finally, he asked if he could go with Foster when he goes to meet William. Foster agreed.

Thoughts kept flashing through Foster's mind. He thought Luke would partner up in building a house if he asked. It's amazing what is possible when you have some money. I need to talk to Sarah and decide what we are going to do and when we are going to do it. This is exciting.

Foster got home from the bank just as Sarah was getting there from the store. Foster said, "Let's go out for dinner. We've got so much to talk about."

"Sounds good and yes we do."

After a quick cleanup they walked to the restaurant that makes the good meatloaf. Along the way Foster asked, "Have you been thinking about our future?"

"All day" she said.

Foster began. "I know it is hard to do my regular work with all these thoughts rushing through my head". He then told about his conversation with Luke. Sarah listened with enthusiasm. Finally, she said, "We need to figure out if we really want to head West. If we do, we need to know the best time to go, what we need in money and things and what we need to learn before we leave."

"Plus, we need to know where we are going. We keep saying West but where West? We have to factor in the weather. I would think we would take the train as far as we can. There we would buy a new horse and..."

Sarah interrupted somewhat forcibly, "Poli is coming."

Foster had never heard her so convicted about anything. He responded, "Sarah it makes a lot more sense to sell Poli here and buy a fresh horse out there. Otherwise, we have to pay to ship the horse."

"I can't leave Poli. She's family."

Foster couldn't believe this. "Honey, I like Poli but she is a horse not family. I promise when we get wherever we are going I'll buy two horses and you will like them just the same."

"She's family".

Foster thought there is no reason to fight this battle now. If and when the time comes Sarah will see the right thing to do. Let us get back to the big issues. "How do we find out more information about moving West?"

Sarah announced, "I've been watching the papers. There is a meeting of people thinking about home steading taking place next Sunday. I think we should go."

Foster agreed and then got into his conversation with Luke and what possibilities that brings. Sarah listened but didn't really get excited. She was dreaming of the West. Foster tried to explain how the money made by building a house could make the journey West easier. Sarah agreed but without much enthusiasm.

Foster, in the little spare time that he had kept trying to learn more skills. He started with meat. This is a two-step process. The first part is killing the animal and preparing it to be butchered. For this he went to the stock yards. The first thing you learn is not to name the animals. He knew this would be an issue with Sarah. The end of the

line for a farm animal is not pleasant. It is harder to put a bullet in the head of a creature you named Jessie. You have to keep it all business. This is food. Foster was happy he didn't have to trade labor for education at the stock yard. It was a simple process. Messy but simple. The big thing learned was how you use almost everything from the carcass. At the stockyard they were working on many animals at the same time. Foster knew he would only be working on one animal at a time so the process would be different.

Foster took particular note of what tools were necessary to begin the butchery process. It looks like 4 different knives are used. There is also a specialty ax that is used to quarter the animal. You are cutting through the spine of the animal. You also need to cut off the legs at the knee and decapitate the beast which is especially gruesome. Skinning the steer was easier than Foster anticipated. Once you got it started you just held out the hide from the carcass and cut with your large knife. If you were saving the hide to tan into leather, you needed to be more careful to end up with larger pieces. He could tell that the work was hard and required strength. It wasn't particularly complicated but awful messy. Foster knew he was going to work for the butcher this Saturday. He wanted to ask what kind of set up or facility was needed to go from hoof to steak. The question was complicated by the fact that he wouldn't be doing this butchering often. "OH well, I've seen enough of this. I'm not looking forward to it but I can do this part of the job."

Foster went home and told Sarah of his morning's adventure. He left out the real bloody parts. He did bring up the subject of leather and tanning.

Sarah immediately volunteered to put that skill on her list to learn. She immediately added pelts and sheep shearing complete with the washing of wool. "There is so much to learn".

That Saturday Foster went to the butcher to trade a day of labor for an education. He liked the butcher, Stan. He was a friendly guy who always looked happy which seemed a little odd because he always had on a white coat covered in patches of blood. It's just part of the job.

Stan asked, "What do you want to learn?"

Foster answered "I guess I need to learn it all. I'm planning on home steading. I will be raising cows, pigs, sheep, chickens and I don't know what else. I need to know everything from killing them to just short of eating them."

"I understand. You won't be doing a lot of them at a time, but you need to know how to do it all."

Foster added, "Yeah and remember I will be out in the wilderness. I need to know how to set up a place to do this."

"That's easy. You said you went down to the stock yard to see what they do?"

Foster replied, "Yeah, that sure is a messy job. It doesn't look too complicated, but it looks like hard work".

Stan said, "Sometimes those animals get up over a thousand pounds. Many times, they don't agree with your intentions"

Foster smiled and said, "Probably not."

"Anyway, when you get done there you usually end up with sides of beef that look like this. If you know what you are doing you will get an extra third of meat from this. I've seen guys hack away and end up throwing away lots of good product. Maybe they don't throw it away but it ends up going with the bones and sinew to make adder or gets ground up instead of being steaks. If you pay attention you will learn the easy mistakes to avoid."

The next two hours were devoted to where to cut what and when. Everything starts with taking off the outer layer. Once you get over the idea of what you are doing it really isn't that hard. Foster took notes on where to begin once you have the animal skinned. As you cut off parts or sections of parts you then further cut and trim on a large table. Then you make different piles of meat, some for roasts, some steaks, with all the loose parts going over to where they are ground up. Once you understand the different procedures it wasn't that hard to learn. It was hard work and you do get bloody. It only took twenty minutes to learn how to kill and dress a chicken.

The pig was a bigger project. Stan got them already beheaded and cut in half. Foster knew he wouldn't be that lucky. Again, it is a messy job. Foster paid particular attention to the beam with hooks that supported the meat for the butchering process. He knew he would need to construct such a station even though he was only doing one animal at a time. The size and weight of pigs, cows and even sheep made it necessary to support them from above while butchering them.

It was a long hard six hours of work. Foster felt comfortable that he could slaughter and butcher an animal. He knew how to set up a workstation and what tools he would need. It was a good education for the time invested. Stan gave Foster two steaks to take home. That was nice.

Sarah had found an ad that was promoting a meeting for people thinking about becoming homesteaders. It was all the way downtown, scheduled for that Sunday afternoon. It took almost an hour for Poli to carry them there. They went inside this big room that had another thirty people sitting on chairs. They found a place up front and sat down.

There were maps and posters displayed for all to see. The other people in the room were varied. Most were about Foster and Sarah's age but a few were older. Some people were talking among themselves while others sat quietly waiting for the presentation to begin. Finally, a man in a suit came out and addressed the group.

"I'd like to welcome you all here to discuss the possibility of moving West. We will be showing you where most of the expansion is taking place along with specific upcoming opportunities. We will talk about what you will need for your trip along with skills you should develop before you begin. We will address some of the dangers and hardships you should prepare for. We have two people here that have successfully homesteaded, that are back here on family business. Their stories will give a firsthand look at life on the prairie."

He started describing the places that were actively seeking homesteaders. He commented on how a bridge had been completed last year that now offered passage over the Missouri River that before required a dangerous ferry crossing. Another bridge is scheduled to open in a couple months that crossed the Mississippi.

While the discussion was going on Sarah whispered to Foster that they could get help from her cousin in St. Louis that appeared to be on the way to where they were going. Foster nodded.

Foster was surprised that the presenter wasn't "selling" the concept of moving West. If anything, he was always warning the group of the dangers and difficulties. In spite of that the group looked committed to begin a new life in a place they have never seen.

The question-and-answer session was exciting. Everyone in the room had pretty much the same questions. How far do we go by train? What should we take from home as compared to buying along the way? How much money do we need? What should we learn before setting out? Once we get there, how do we buy supplies? How long does it take to build a home that would afford protection for the winter? Should we expect troubles from Indians or rustlers? All great questions.

Sarah was hanging on every word writing down notes to read over later. She noticed that women were asking questions specifically about their role. How to cook? What should they take with them? How much farming will they be doing? Do you live out of the wagon before a house is constructed?

The answers were varied. The biggest issue is completing a home before winter hit. It all depended on when you get your land. If you are late in the summer or early fall you can't build before the winter hits. You might start on your house but not get it done in time. You would have to go back to a city to live out the winter and finish your project in spring. If you were lucky enough to get your land in April or early May, you might be able to get yourself ready for the first winter.

The question and answers then lead to where to go. Various areas were discussed. Some people in the room had family already settled in different places. They knew where they were going. A discussion then began about a "land rush" that was sponsored by the government in the Kansas territory just West of Kansas City. The land was free if in five years you have settled it with a sustainable crop or a ranching business. You had to "rush" to the land and stake out a claim. Each claim was a quarter section or 160 acres. The "land rush" was taking place on April 30th of next year.

Foster couldn't believe what he heard. A free 160-acre parcel to homestead. Plus, it was kind of near Sarah's family. All you had to do was race with other folks to get the best parcel. Simple.

Foster had a million thoughts in his head as he lifted Sarah on the back of Poli to head home. Conversation is tough on a horse so they both knew they would talk out their feelings when they got back and could settle in on their sofa at home.

"So tell me what did you think?" Said Foster.

"I want to go West and nothing they said has scared me away"

"How did you like the "land rush" deal?"

"I guess that's exciting, and it is near my cousin".

Foster spoke deliberately, looking at Sarah and said, "I think we should prepare to be in that land rush. That means we should be ready to leave here March 15th giving us 45 days to train out there and be prepared to run for our land."

Sarah almost squealed, "My God we are going to do this".

Foster quietly spoke, "Only if you want to. Now that we have money, I can build homes for others here in Buffalo and make a lot of money. If I have you by my side, I am happy to do that. But if you really want to go West then this is our best opportunity. Free land. I can't believe it. It's now September. I've got work all the way through to when we leave. We have time to learn all the things that we need to know to survive out there. We have more than twice the money they say we need. If you really want to be a prairie woman all you have to do is say yes."

"Yes"

"Are you sure?" Foster said while looking deep into her eyes.

"Yes. I know it will be hard, I know I won't have the creature comforts that I am used to, and I know that I have to learn new skills to make life possible, but yes."

Foster smiled and said, "I love your attitude, I love your spirit, I love that we will be doing this crazy new thing together and most of all, I love you."

Sarah looked up with a smile and said, "Poli's coming."

CHAPTER 15 CEILING MONDAY - GETTING EDUCATED FOR THE PRAIRIE

"Damn, your great grama had onions. With all that was going on she made sure that she had her horse as part of the deal. That's solid."

Ed responded, "Yeah she had a strong will, that will surface later in the story. You've got to be happy that at least we are talking about the "land rush"?"

Gene says, "yeah, but we aren't there yet. Let me get this, they had six months to mentally and physically prepare to leave everything behind and step out into a land with bushwhackers and Indians. They had hopes of developing a home knowing they had to build it before the snows came in. They didn't know exactly where they were going to land or how good their parcel would be. They didn't know if they would have water. We're talking some pretty serious balls here."

Ed says, "Yeah, they were pioneers. You don't know what you've got until you get it. We sometimes joke, have faith."

Gene says, "yeah, faith today and faith back then, it was a different game. Your life depended upon the outcome."

Ed stated, "That's why they call them pioneers, they are special."

Gene was reeling, he had read books and seen stories on tv but getting into the decision-making process of potential pioneers was over his head. Then he thought, I guess that's the way it worked back then. Life had its problems where they were, and this was a new world. Take a shot, go for it, at least you tried, were thoughts processed by thousands who decided to go West and make a new beginning. He thought about decisions in his own life and how they paled in comparison with what these folks were doing. Wow.

"OK you have screwed up my head with this one a little bit but I dig it. Tomorrow is ceiling day. We have us, we have paid people and we have volunteers that thought they were being left out. I still don't get it but I will have doughnuts here at 9:00 in the morning. I've got all the supplies. It should work. We'll see."

Leslie had to be at work early. Ed rose with her and headed to work. It was still almost dark when he arrived at the Bucket. He looked to the East and saw the sun was beginning to rise. He remembered that each of the diaries told the stories of how the men in the family always liked watching the sunrise. It was never a big thing to Ed. Whenever he caught one it looked pretty but not really earth shattering. This time he decided to study it to see what he had been missing.

The first thing he noticed was the changing color of the darkened sky. All of it took on a lighter hue. Clearly most of the action was over where the sun was beginning to show itself. That area was clearly brighter than the rest. He then noticed that there were clouds not over the sun but in the sky between the horizon and where he was standing. As the sun rose the color of the clouds changed a lot. First, he noticed that the Eastern edge of the

clouds were different than the rest. It was almost like a uniform border of each lit brighter reflecting more of the light. You could tell that the cloud was the same color throughout, but this edge was glowing differently. After another few minutes, the color show began. With the first quarter of the sun now visible over the trees these same clouds drastically changed colors. There were three definable levels of orange and pink. You could see that the clouds different placement in the sky created different reflectors and hence different colors. He'd never noticed that before. The next thing that hit his senses was the calling of the birds. He couldn't see the birds but knew there were more than one kind by the different noises they made. This too had escaped his earlier understanding. Now as the sun was fully visible the color reflected by the clouds began to fade back to a whitish grey. Interesting. He then understood why his ancestors enjoyed this so much. He then decided that he needed to take the time to do this again, maybe with Leslie.

Ed went into the Bucket and put on the coffee. At 8:00 Gene arrived. Not much conversation but Ed gave a quick inspection of the donut boxes that Gene had brought. Donnie arrived followed by others. People dug into the doughnuts. Everyone tried to visualize the job in front of them. You could tell that Gene had already thought this out as he set out the stations for work. With help from Donnie, he laid out the tarp for drying out the tiles. He even placed the 2 x 4 so the tiles would be lifted from the surface while drying. There was one 8 foot ladder at the restaurant but Gene had brought a second from home. Ellery arrived followed by the girls and Harry. This was clearly Gene's show.

Gene gathered everyone together and explained the tasks. "Ladies, I want you to dust every piece of wood in the bar. Once you have done that you need to go back and using the brushes over here I need you to varnish all the same wood. If you find that it goes on easier with a cloth then switch out your brushes. I'm looking for a smooth finish without any globs. Do it section by section and use the tarps to cover the floor or furniture underneath. Any questions?"

"We got it boss."

"OK Donnie, we don't know how fast this is going to go until we do it. We need to pull out the ceiling tiles and bring them over here to be painted. While you are up there, we need a good cleaning on the grid that supports the tiles. Work with Ellery until you've got the rhythm right. You are trying to have tiles over here and grid cleaned so the whole deal flows. Get it?"

"Got it."

And the game began.

The girls asked if they could turn on the TV to a music channel. Done. They started at the entrance. It went quickly but they knew the varnishing would take longer. Meanwhile Donnie was pulling tiles and passing them to Ellery who carried them outside to Gene and Ed. Donnie started with two tiles per load. They then went to three. That seemed to be the right number to keep the flow going. The problem was moving the ladder. From one spot you could pull four tiles. It would be better if you could clean the grid while you were there then move the ladder and get the next four tiles. This caused a little down time for Ellery. It worked out that Ellery would go help place the painted tiles for Ed while Donnie was cleaning and moving. It wasn't perfect but it was going.

Harry would take the tiles from Ellery, clean them off and stack them for painting. Ed and Gene both had rollers to paint the tiles. Harry and Ellery would take the painted tiles and lay them out on the tarp to dry. Everything was moving along nicely. After about an hour and a half the girls were almost finished dusting and ready to start varnishing. Donnie was about 2/3 done with pulling the tiles. Harry had a big stack of tiles cleaned off ready for

painting. Ed and Gene were trying to catch up. Without anybody saying anything Harry filled another paint tray, grabbed a roller and began helping where it was needed. Gene noticed Harry's move and thought, "Damn, that's initiative"

By the time noon rolled along Donnie had finished taking down all the tiles in the bar and entranceway. The grid was clean and ready to be filled with the painted tiles. He went to the kitchen, washed up good and started making pizzas for the lunch break. The ladies were about halfway through the varnishing process. It looked great. The whole room looked a little strange. The empty ceiling grid looked a little weird and having half of the wood varnished made you try to visualize what it would look like when it was all done. It was time for lunch.

As everyone was sitting down to eat Leslie walked in. Ed said, "Your timing is great. You got here in time to eat."

Leslie joked back, "Hey timing is everything. God, it is coming along great. The wood in the bar looks terrific. I can't wait to see what it looks like with the tiles in."

Gene said, "Well we are going to start putting them in right after lunch. They're almost dry enough."

Ed said, "Yeah, Gene quarterbacked this thing. He had us all moving like the parts of a Swiss watch. I can't wait until the customers see it tomorrow. You wouldn't believe how dirty some of these tiles were. So much smoke. You know they ought to have a law that you can't smoke in restaurants."

Donnie spoke up, "Good luck with that. People will always smoke in restaurants, and definitely in bars."

Everyone was eating. Leslie looked over at Ed and said, "I'll come by after work and see how it all turned out. Are you going to have any time afterwards?"

"I just might" said Ed with a smile.

"I'll see you then"

After lunch they started replacing the tiles in the bar as Donnie and Elery moved on to the dining room. The girls finished the varnishing. The room looked great. The girls jumped into the tile game and made it go a lot faster. By the time 4:00 rolled around the last tiles were being installed as Ed and Gene were cleaning up the rollers and tarp.

Gene went into the bar and poured a couple beers. He yelled out, "anybody want anything?"

He made the drinks as he began thanking everyone for their work. He silently looked around the room with a smile on his face. "God this looks great. We didn't spend a lot of money, but we sure made a big difference."

Ed added, "Imagine with the pictures and banners up. Do you think you have enough?"

Gene shaking his head said, "I think so, but I won't know until I hang what we've got."

"Why don't we see if the kids want to help? I bet they will."

Ed called out, "Hey guys, you don't have to do this but if you want to help, we are going to hang the banners and pictures."

Donnie was first with a "Hell yeah."

Elery and the girls joined in. Karen said, "Hey it's like decorating a Christmas tree. This is going to be fun."

Harry was almost embarrassed when he said, "I've got to get home. I promised my wife. Besides, decorating has never been a skill of mine."

Gene said, "Harry, you did great today. Ed and I really appreciate it. Thanks."

Harry said goodbye and left just as Leslie entered. "God this looks great!" She exclaimed.

Gene responded, "Yeah this was all your idea. They're going to start hanging the sport stuff. Your opinion would be more than welcome."

"Cool, I love it. What have you got?"

Gene said, "I put it all on the tables over there. The kids are already looking it over."

Leslie walked over to where the young people were trying to decide what goes where. Leslie jumped in.

Ed looked at Gene and said, "I don't think they need us. I think another drink is in order."

"Sounds good to me. I don't have an eye for that kind of stuff. Besides I don't want to ruin their fun."

A little more than an hour went by and the place changed beautifully. Gene thought about how he had walked in this place almost every day for 14 years. Now it looks like a totally different bar. Wow.

Leslie turned on all the TVs. She wanted to see it the way the customers would see it. Then she asked, "How does the dining room look"?

Ed, Gene and Leslie went to the dining room. The ceiling made a big difference but they all knew the big work was going to be next Monday. Leslie was playing with the light switches. There were three banks of lights each individually controlled. Then she said, "I need to spend a little more of your money. Not much, probably a couple hundred bucks."

Gene said, "You haven't led me astray so far, what do you want?"

Leslie began, "I really hate the lighting in here. You've got three banks of four fixtures each has two neon lights. When you have them all on it looks like a cafeteria in here. If you just light the center bank and hang some Italian roof lights along the sides I think it would soften it up."

Before Gene could ask, Ed jumped in with, "What are Italian roof lights?"

"That might not be their real name but it's strings of clear 40-watt bulbs. You hang them from the ceiling with a little swag in the strings. If the room is still too bright you can unscrew half the bulbs in the center bank of neon. We'll have to play with it a little bit to get it right. Oh yeah one more thing I've been thinking about, can you build me a system of shelves along this side of the back wall?"

Ed looked up and said, "Yeah, I guess."

She then added, "Not just shelves, actually boxes with vertical wood as well. I want them to be different sizes, kind of like this." She got out a piece of paper and sketched her idea. The section of wall she wanted done was about 15 feet long. The design was a little out there with no two boxes being the same size. It really was quite clever.

Ed was looking at the drawing and asked, "How deep do you want them?"

"Maybe 4 inches, I don't know maybe 6. I want them painted black. I think it will look cool."

Gene asked Ed, "Can you do that?"

"Yeah, four or five hours in my garage. Then get them painted up and hung after we put up the rice paper. She's right it will look cool and give some texture to a pretty flat room."

Gene spoke up, "You know we haven't finished the celebration over getting the bar done and we are charging in on the dining room. My first question is what color task is this?"

Ed said, "Red and blue."

Leslie added, "And pink"

Gene said, "I take it you are pink. I've spent my time getting suited up for this ceiling deal. I really haven't gotten my arms around next week's stuff."

Leslie said, "Hey pink has got you covered. I already ordered the paper, paint, and tools you will need. I also have the chair rail ordered and ready for pick up. Here's what I don't have. A miter box for cutting the chair rail, sufficient tarps to cover the floor and finishing nails."

ED responded, "I've got the miter box and finishing nails. We've got some tarps but not enough. I'll get the wood and paint for the shelves. Do either one of you know how to frame and matt the pictures?"

Gene and Leslie both responded at the same time, "I do."

Gene continued, "There are enough pink jobs going on here. I've done picture framing before. This is a good job for me."

Leslie added, "OK, I'll get the lights and plants."

Gene added, "I think we all need a drink."

As they walked into the bar Ed took Leslie's hand in his. She smiled. Gene poured drinks and then began, "Can you imagine what this place is going to be like when we don't have 10 projects going on at the same time?"

Ed answered, "Maybe boring."

Gene quickly spoke, "A little boredom could be a good thing. I guess we don't have to worry about that for a while."

Leslie was looking around the room and said, "Gene I think your decorations look great. I think it is just enough."

"I've got a couple more banners coming in but I know where I'm going to hang them."

Leslie then looked at Ed and asked, "Do you want to mark out the landscape island while I'm here?"

Ed said, "Sure, I'll get the paint." He left the bar and came back with a spray can of yellow paint and said, "Let's go."

The three of them went outside. Leslie paced off her idea of where it would be. Gene thought it should be smaller and Ed thought bigger. The men finally agreed with Leslie. Gene began painting the line as directed. When he

was done Leslie moved the guys towards the street so they could look back at the marked off area. She then began to describe what plants were going where. She had done this before but somehow having a yellow line on the ground made it easier to visualize the finished project. When she finished her description all three of them kept looking at the area without saying a thing. Finally, Ed piped up with, "We really haven't talked about how we are going to dress up the front."

Gene said with a shrug, "You're killing me."

Leslie said, "Let's go back inside so I can show you something."

They returned to the bar where their drinks were still almost full. Leslie got out her briefcase and pulled out a sketch of the front of the building complete with new window treatments and an awning that ran the full length of the porch. On the two-foot vertical flap of the awning were the words THE SHINY BUCKET.

Ed looked at Gene and said, "Can I pick a designer or what."

Gene looked at the both of them and said, "Holy shit. This is incredible but not to be a buzz killer, can we afford this?"

Leslie said, "If you include your sign budget with what you had budgeted for the front then it comes in good. I don't know if you'll like this one but I was thinking of drawing a line through the word RUSTY on your existent sign and painting in the word SHINEY. Something like this." She then pulls out a rendering of the sign with the change of words. She then added, "I checked with Uncle Pauly and he says you don't need a permit for the awning and you don't need a permit to make the change to the sign. If you bought a new sign you would have to go through the Planning Board before you could hang it. Here is something I can't get you. You can't serve alcohol on your new porch without going through the liquor board. That could take months, but in the meantime, it is a comfortable place for your customers to sit and wait for their table. You could build in a bench for a couple hundred dollars or buy patio furniture. If you go with the furniture you will need to lock them together at night or be prepared to buy more."

Gene had this almost stupid grin on his face. He looked over at Ed and said, "Where did you get this woman?"

Ed smiled and said, "She is something isn't she? I love everything, what about lighting?"

Leslie responded. "I was just thinking of going with another couple strings of lights like we are using in the dining room."

Ed and Gene were both nodding their heads. They could see it. The pictures Leslie provided made it easy. Then Leslie added, "Oh, I almost forgot, here's a sketch of your landscaping."

The boys spread the three sketches on the bar and examined each heavily. It was quiet for a while until Gene broke the silence with, "And all of this is in budget?"

Leslie answered, "Not the patio furniture."

Gene and Ed both chuckled. "What color is the awning?" Ed asked.

"I was thinking a dark green with white letters. You could go with a blue or even a burgundy."

Gene said, "If you like green then I like green. I'm riding your bus lady. I can't believe what you put together

here.”

Ed jumped in with “I’m with him, meaning we are with you. What do we have to do? What do we need to order? Who installs the Awning? How does this fit in with what Pauli is doing? What else am I forgetting?”

Leslie answered, “You’ve got most of it. I’ve taken all the measurements and spoke to the awning guy. Once I give him the color, he can have the awning cut, shaped and painted in 10 days. You have a decision to make on the installation. The awning guy can do it or you can have Pauli do it. The price is about the same.”

Ed and Gene looked at each other and both said, “Pauli.” Then Gene added, “What about the sign painting, who is going to do that?”

Leslie answered, “I was thinking me. It’s the only way I’m going to get it the way I want. It’s no big thing.”

Gene mockingly said, “No big thing. Do you want us to take it down so you can work on it on a table or something?”

Leslie responded, “No, it’s only one word, I can do that off a ladder.”

Gene shook his head. He knew he wasn’t going to get much sleep tonight with all these ideas pinging around in his brain. Ed hoped he wasn’t going to get much sleep tonight also but for different reasons. They talked through the details and made red, blue and pink lists for both the dining room and the outside. Ed’s biggest job was organizing the painting of the rest of the outside of the building. It was going to be a “hair on fire” week.

When all the first level planning was done Gene looked up and said, “Why don’t you kids get out of here? I’ll lock up and do the same.”

All three knew that Gene was hoping that Ed and Leslie would leave together. Ed and Leslie were hoping for the same thing.

The next morning Ed and Gene met at the Bucket as usual.

Gene said, “Last night was intense.”

Ed looked at him strangely and said. “You bet”

“I didn’t mean it like that. I meant the plans for the front.”

Ed added, “I know what you meant and yes it was intense. The trouble now is we must focus on a regular work week. I’ve got to get with Harry and Donnie on inventory levels. I’ve got to interview more staff. When I’m squared away with that I need to set up a painting crew. I need to get with Pauly to borrow his paint gun and check with him on the schedule of work for next Monday.”

Gene said, “Don’t forget to talk to him about the awning. Make sure he knows that we trust Leslie and he can work with her freely. He should be looking for another check. Ask him the amount and we’ll have it ready for him. This is going to sound stupid, especially coming from me but I’m not nervous about what we have to do. I think we have a great plan and good people running all the parts.”

Ed with a smile says, “Yeah, I feel the same way. The stuff that was hard for us to do for the last couple weeks is

almost old hat now. The new stuff will get done. If we bust time on something, it doesn't really matter. I don't think we will. In fact, I feel so good that I'm going to give you a story without you even asking."

Gene answers with a smile, "I wasn't going to ask, but you know I could use a story break. Thanks."

Ed and Gene topped off their coffee as Ed began.

"The first thing they had to do was tell Aunt Helen. You could tell she was happy for them but knew she was going to miss them. Sarah had written a list of things she wanted to learn over the winter. She found three books at the library that had some good ideas.

Foster went back to the stable where he bought Poli and asked for some advice. Thomas was helpful in a couple of ways. He had a couple horse births coming up and invited Foster to participate. He then went over some tips on boarding a bunch of animals. Taking care of Poli was one thing but taking care of dozens of animals was a different story. He then gave Foster the name of a rancher and a farmer in the area that would be happy to talk to him as well.

The next weekend Foster did just that. He brought Sarah along in hopes that their wives could counsel her as well. Both families were great. The rancher cautioned Foster on the difference in feeding in winter. If there was grazing land all you had to do was give them access to water. In the winter you needed to feed them as well. He went over how much feed you had to bring in for each animal per week. The winter could have you cut off from supplies for a couple months. You needed to count your stock and plan out how much feed to have stored before the first snows set in. Before this Foster had no idea about feeding animals over the winter.

The farmer and his wife were friendly as well. The farmer asked Foster if he was trying to grow crops to sell or merely survive.

Foster responded, "Survive at first. I figure I'm going to have 50 or so animals to feed as well as us."

"That might be a lot of livestock to start out with. If it was me, I'd go with about half of that for the first year, then grow it up. Either way you are going to need a lot of hay and some grain. Corn might be the easiest. Then you will need a fair amount of vegetables for yourself. My wife will show your wife how to "put up" fruits and vegetables. Over the winter you will probably eat a steer, a lamb and a pig. The good news is they will stay good in the cold. Keeping meat fresh when it's hot is another matter. You will want to build a smoke house and a root cellar. I'll show you mine when we get up near the house."

Foster's head was spinning. He was going to have about seven months to build a shelter good enough for the winter while he is plowing the land to get the crops in. He's also going to need a barn.

Meanwhile Sarah was talking to Martha who was so excited about the thought of moving West. "We're settled now so I know William will never move. I'm so happy for you and your adventure."

They quickly got down to business. Martha showed Sarah her garden. It was big. Martha said, "I grow all the vegetables we eat for the whole year. Over here I have all my berries and grapes. Just over there we have an orchard with apple, plum and pear trees. They take a couple years to get going. Do you know how to preserve?

"I've made strawberry jam. Not much about 10 jars."

Martha smiled and said, "You are going to learn how to preserve all the fruits and vegetables. A lot of the fruit and vegetables come in at different times. So, one week you might be putting up beans or peas and the next week you are doing fruit. About the middle of August, a whole bunch of things get ripe and you are working into the night to save it before it goes bad. You will also learn to use everything. All the trimmings are saved to feed the chickens or sheep. By the way have you ever killed a chicken?"

Sarah answered sheepishly, "I've plucked a couple but never killed one. Foster said he would take care of the killing part."

Martha said, "Your man is going to be so busy you had better learn to do the hard jobs."

"I agree". Sarah said.

The men came in from the fields and met up with the ladies at the vegetable garden. Foster was taken with the size. The tour continued to berries and orchard and ended at the root cellar. As they walked in they immediately noticed the change in temperature. There were shallow bins filled with potatoes, squash, beets, and apples. Some plants were hung upside down from the rafters. There were big jars of seeds. Martha said, "I kind of manage this place. The cooler temperatures keep the vegetables from going bad, or at least it slows them down. I select what I cook on how soon something might go over. I also store my canned fruits and vegetables as you see."

Sarah looked at shelves packed with cans and jars. There must have been over 200 of them. All she could think about was the five hours it took her to make her 10 jars strawberry jam. She didn't even grow the berries. She kept telling herself that she could do this.

They all went upstairs and had a glass of lemonade. Sarah asked Martha, "Do you keep any medicine here?"

"I've got some powders that make up a tonic for the fever and another one for an upset stomach. I've got bandages and ointments in case someone gets cut. This isn't going to help you very much but if something bad happens we are 18 miles from Doc Benson."

Foster said, "Yeah we are going to be a lot further away than that. We will need to prepare."

On that sobering note they started to say goodbye when Martha said, "Why don't I pull out my recipes for canning all the different things. I'll also write down how much of everything I plant. You could come out again and copy them".

Sarah said, "That would be wonderful if you don't mind."

Martha smiled and nodded, the men shook hands and Foster and Sarah mounted Poli for the trip home.

Once they got home they sat on the sofa and talked. Sarah said, "I don't know if I am more excited or scared."

"It really is a lot to learn. Can you imagine how much hay I need? I knew we needed a home, but I forgot about providing shelter for the animals. That's a whole other building to build."

Sarah added, "I saw that the barn thing bothered you. Wouldn't it be easier to build one building just a bit larger for us and the animals?"

Foster said, "Yeah, that would be a lot easier. We'd be smelling manure all winter."

"I don't mind the smell of manure. Could you plan it so the next year you build a barn and change over the other into more house"?

Foster thought for a moment, "Yeah, I could do that. That's a great idea."

"See, I'm already thinking like a prairie woman. Did you see the size of Martha's Garden? It was huge. Can you imagine clearing all of that?"

Foster added, "Actually I need to clear twice that with the other half for seed corn. I'm going to need a plow; in fact I'm going to need a lot of stuff. One new skill you need to learn is driving a wagon. It's a day's ride to Kansas City. I'm going to need 3 or 4 loads of building materials alone. I bet we are going to make ten or more trips the first year. I can go along on a couple but if you knew how to drive a wagon with two horses it would give me more time to build. I think I might need to hire a guy to help. I can build anything but it sure is easier with a second set of hands when you are placing wood or anything heavy."

Sarah spoke up with confidence, "Yes I can learn to drive a wagon. I can learn to plow. I can help you lift wood into place. And, I can kill a chicken."

The look on her face was precious. She was committed and she wanted her man to know that she wasn't afraid of work or anything else. Foster smiled and thought, oh what a lucky man am I.

There was still so much work to do. Sarah got with Martha a few more times. She was so helpful. It was kind of like Martha being able to share in with the adventure. She not only got all the recipes she needed but she also made lists of tools for cooking, gardening, shearing and skinning. She also shared what food needed to be brought along. A lot of it was like what was written in the books she read but Martha made it all real. Foster was busy organizing what he needed and when he needed to do what jobs. He knew he would have to find water. It could be a stream or by digging a well, but he had to get water. He knew he had to clear enough land to plant. Sarah said she would learn to work the plow, but Foster knew better. He had helped a friend plow a field a couple of years back. It is grueling. Maybe the second or third year she could handle it but the first year you get all the rocks and stumps. He knew he was going to do the plowing so they could get their seeds in. He figured they could sleep in the wagon at first, but they needed shelter as soon as possible.

He liked the idea of building small and then expanding. The first structure would be one room with a stove he would buy in Kansas City. He would then keep building on, eventually having enough room for the couple and the animals. He had to think through what animals he would buy and when. Chickens were the easiest. He knew he was going to need two horses. It would be nice to have more stock grazing for free over the spring and summer. We'll see.

The inheritance money came through without a hitch. He talked to the banker about leaving most of it in the bank and being able to get it out in Kansas City. They signed some papers, and it was all taken care of. Foster spent a lot of time at the grange and at major tool stores. People were helpful but knew that he was going to buy product once he got out west.

Sarah met with Doctor Benson who was quite helpful. He not only gave her a list of things to take along but also went over some simple procedures like treating a wound or dealing with a cold or stomach ailments. Again, she took good notes.

On one of the trips out to the Martha's farm Foster talked to Matt about how he would handle the first year on the property. Foster knew he had to start by finding water. After that he knew he had to get a crop in and build shelter for he and Sarah and whatever livestock he bought. Sarah had gotten a list of what to plant and Foster could tell how much land would need to be plowed for that. Foster had no clue on how much hay and oats needed to be planted to survive the winter.

Matt's first question was, "How are you set for money?"

Foster responded, "We're good actually. We came into some money that should make it a lot easier."

Matt continued, "Are you going to be able to buy the building materials for your home?"

"Yeah, I already decided I'm buying everything instead of cutting trees and digging rocks."

"You've got money for livestock and tools like a plow?" Matt questioned.

Foster responded, "Yeah, I've priced everything out and we are covered with money to spare."

Matt pressed on, "If you had to, could you buy enough food for you and your horses to get through the first winter? How about this, could you afford to hire someone to help you build or plow?"

Foster looked up sheepishly and said, "I was hoping not to do either of those things, but I see what you are saying, if my plans didn't work could I afford to make it through the winter by buying food and getting help...yeah, I have enough money to do that."

Matt smiled and said, "I feel better but let's talk about getting as much done as you can. The tricky part is buying livestock. For each animal you buy you will need that much more hay, oats, water and shelter. Once you see what your land looks like you will know better how tough it is going to be. If you've got grass for grazing that makes it a lot easier. If water is close and easy to get at then you've got another winner. If you get unlucky you could spend the first couple months just trying to find and digging for water. You're in God's hands."

Foster had thought through all these thoughts before. He never really shared some of his fears with Sarah. His worst of the worst position was if he found he had a horrible piece of land and it was just too tough to make it happen he would still have enough money to go back to Buffalo and make a good life before he committed to buying livestock. He had to go on as if the worst wasn't going to happen. One of his problems was when to tell others especially Luke what he was doing and when. He wanted to keep working through the winter. He was a little afraid that Luke would lay him off if he knew he was leaving in the spring. After a couple days of serious thought, he thought it only fair to inform his boss of his intentions. As he had hoped Luke was supportive of the move west and offered some guidance on timely buying of materials for the building of his home. Foster thought he knew all that but found out that he had tips that would be helpful on separating the work into sections that he could do alone and other parts that he would need a second set of strong hands. By staging them right he could hopefully hire a hand for a couple weeks to get all the two-man work done at the same time.

He really needed to focus on the farming and ranching. He needed to figure out where to build the initial structure, where to put the coral and out house. He never really planted a crop. He remembered what the rows looked like when he plowed that one time but wasn't there when they seeded it. Do you just hope for enough rain or do you try to bring water to the crops? How and where do you water the animals? These are all important questions that need answers. He wondered if other new settlers were preparing like he and Sarah.

Matt offered lots of training. One day he hooked up his plow and showed Foster some tips on keeping straight and deep furrows and how to turn at the end of a row. He then went through the planting process pointing out spacing and depth of seed. He also showed how to inspect the seeds to make sure you only planted the good ones that stood a chance of growing. They then talked about the design and placement of the house.

As part of the training Foster bought three guns. He bought a rifle, shotgun and revolver. He and Sarah both practiced firing each of them. The shotgun was a 20 gauge, selected because it packed less of a punch than a 12 gauge. Even so, Sarah had to practice a lot to handle the recoil. When you are practice firing the weapons the noise and smell of smoke take your mind to what it will be like when you need to fire them. Visions of hunting are easy to handle. Firing for defense can bring up scary thoughts. It's best not to ponder.

Foster also went to the train station to see what it costs in money and time to get to Kansas City from Buffalo. In order to better his upcoming argument with Sarah he also found out what it would cost to ship Poli. The trip was going to take over a week and it would cost almost the same for Poli as it would for each of them. There were two stop overs on the trip which would be the only time Poli could be let out of her stall. He hoped that would help him convince Sarah of the obvious.

One night after work Sarah and Foster were sharing events of the day when Foster decided he might just as well start the conversation about Poli. He opened with his report on travel time and expense and ended with the specific cost to bring a horse. He knew it wasn't going well when Sarah said, "It isn't just a horse, it's Poli."

Here we go. "Now Darling. You know I like Poli and this is not an easy decision but one that must be made. We know we are going to need two horses and a wagon. The shipping cost for Poli is the cost of another horse."

Sarah's eyes brightened, "I don't care what it costs, Poli is family, she has to come."

"But dear, we can sell her to some nice people here where she will be well taken care of."

"We are not selling Poli"

"Maybe we could sell her to Matt and Martha. You know they would take good care of her."

Sarah didn't back down an inch, "Yes I know they would take care of her but I don't care. She is family and she is coming."

Foster thought it is time to use the comfort factor. "You know it takes over a week for the trip. All that time Poli will be tied up in a railroad car. She won't be able to walk around. Somebody else will be giving her food and water, I hope. I think it is cruel to put Poli through all of that."

Sarah quickly responded, "Well I went to the railroad too. On a trip like this, there are two stop overs where Poli will be able to run around a little. There are two other stops with over a 2 hour wait. At those we can walk her around. It's never more than two days where she is tied up going nowhere. She does that now. As I told you before I have some money saved up and will be throwing it in for our move. I just want the first money to go for paying for Poli. Besides, we've never talked about it but I know you noticed that most people moving west have far less money than us. We need to take Poli, she is family."

Foster quickly came to two conclusions. First, Poli is coming, and second Sarah can sure stand her ground when something is important to her. He couldn't believe that she had gone to the railroad and researched the trip. It is just easier to give in. As he lost the battle over Poli he further realized what a strong good woman he had as a

wife.

CHAPTER 16 THE RENDERING - THE TRIP TO THE LAND RUSH

The week pretty much flew by. Ed started with a Tuesday afternoon meeting with Gene, Donnie, Harry, and Karen. He said, "For lack of a better word this is a management meeting. Each of you are managing at least one facet of this business. First, I think it is important for you to know that. You need to know that you have earned it through your efforts and attitude. This might sound strange, but we are going to start getting busy."

Everyone looked at each other and smiled. Donnie was first to say what everyone was thinking, "START to get busy. We've been blowin' the doors off this place."

Ed smiling said, "I know but it is just the beginning. Everything we have done so far has been accomplished without any marketing. Two big things are going to happen in the next two weeks. First, how do you like the looks of the bar and ceiling?"

Everybody talked at once saying how good it all looked.

Ed continued, "Well this coming Monday all kinds of refurbishments are taking place. We've got a whole new look for the dining room, the men's room is being expanded, both johns are being made handicap accessible and the outside is going to be painted and landscaped."

This time silence took over the group. Everyone knew these things were coming but hearing that change is upon us is eye opening. Gene looked the most forlorn. Finally, Karen spoke, "I think it's great. Every time a regular comes in they are wowed by the last set of changes either to the menu or the building. We are what's happening. It's exciting."

Harry added, "I think it is great also. Can we really get it all done in a couple weeks?"

Donnie added, "I knew all of this was coming and I am happy it's here. Initially I was a little overwhelmed but when you think about it, it's ok. The contractor is doing his thing. We've got a Monday decorating party. The people you've got running the different parts like Paul and Leslie know their stuff. I guess the only weak link is painting the building that I think is still me."

Ed said, "Yes it is, if you can handle it".

Donnie said, "I can handle it. I can work long and hard but I can't work in two places at the same time."

Ed continued, "That's one of the reasons we are meeting today. We know we are going to need to staff up anyway so we might as well do it now. I must have 15 job applications sitting on my desk. I'll conduct some first interviews. Then I am going to need each of you to interview and select people. Donnie you need at least two pizza people, Harry you need two and Karen you need three servers and three busboy/dishwashers.. Gene I think you need at least one more bar person. Notice I said person, I think a woman might be a good move. Everybody cool on that?"

Everyone nodded agreement.

Ed continued, "Ok, I need a couple more things. First, for each job, like pizza, pasta, floor, etc. I need an opening

and closing procedure. Right now, we are all just doing what is necessary because we know what needs to be done. As we grow in employees, we need to have specific instructions. Eventually we will have job descriptions for each position, but this is at least a good start. Lastly, I want you each to think through your staffing levels. We know there are going to be times like Friday and Saturday night that we are going to be running around with our hair on fire. And we know that Tuesday lunch will be slow. Let's break down our level of business into categories one through four. One being slow and 4 being crazy. How many people would you have working for the best coverage of each level of business. Harry with you it is easy it's either one or two. You alone or you with a helper. We will start scheduling a salad person for busy levels 3 and 4. Pizza could be a little more complicated. Karen, yours is the toughest for servers and bussers. I'll have a chance to meet with each of you to talk this through. Think about it and you can snag me whenever you want with a question. Everybody got it?"

Donnie piped up, "Wait a minute. Way back at the beginning you said there were two reasons why we were going to start to get busy. You only told us one, improvements. What's the second?"

Ed says, "Marketing. We will be meeting with the press to run some stories about us for general marketing of the new Shiny Bucket. But we will also be target marketing for Saturday, Sunday and Monday football. And flyer marketing for the pick- up and especially delivery business."

Harry said, "You are firing on all cylinders."

Ed responded slowly, "Yes we are."

The meeting broke up with everyone leaving still talking to each other. Gene called Ed to the bar and poured them both a beer. He said, "If bullshit were electricity, you would be a power station."

"There was no bullshit" Ed said almost with indignation.

Gene responded, "Yeah I know but it sounded so good it felt like bullshit. Can we really do all of this?"

Ed said, "We'll see how they do. They haven't disappointed me yet. I unveiled a little bit more of the blue sky. As long as we keep coming through, they will come through."

Gene shook his head a little puzzled and said, "You got each of them to take on more responsibility and do homework. You didn't offer them anything."

Ed said genuinely, "Oh but I did, I offered them respect. And there was no bullshit. They all know that I respect them for who they are and what they do. But yes, we are going to give them more money."

Gene nodded and said, "I agree."

Ed could tell that Donnie had a few minutes, so he motioned him over to a seat. He began, "How did you like the meeting?"

Donnie answered with a smile, "Just great. It's like every day something cool is happening here. Everybody is getting excited."

Ed continued, "Well I've got you pretty well double booked. Can you keep enough qualified people on the oven and still take on this painting thing?" You are looking at some long hours, are you sure you are ok?"

Donnie joked back, "Yeah long hours like you and Gene put in regularly. I can handle it. You know three sides of

the building are easy. I haven't got in my head what you are doing to the front."

Ed quipped, "Don't feel bad, neither do I. Leslie is coming in tonight to discuss that. Would you like to come to that meeting?"

"Absolutely"

"OK you're working with Elery tonight, right? Let him stay and finish up so you can break for the meeting at 9:00. I know one thing we are doing that you haven't heard yet. We are extending the porch and covering it all with a green awning with the words THE SHINY BUCKET on the front flap. We are also painting the front door and adding all new hardware. Plus, we are handicap ramping the entranceway."

Donnie said, "That sounds great"

Ed said, "Yeah that was Leslie's latest great idea. I don't know what she is planning for the window treatments. But we will find out tonight."

Donnie reached out his hand to Ed and said "Thank you. You are including me in what is obviously important to you. I want you to know that I am honored. I will not disappoint you."

Ed shook his hand and said "One of the best days for this restaurant was when your sister said you were looking for work. You have never disappointed me."

Ed went to the kitchen to talk to Harry "We're not going to be closed on Mondays anymore. Plus, you are going to need a vacation. We've got to train somebody up. Right now, if push came to grunt Donnie and I could almost do what you do. But we've got other stuff to do."

Harry understood. He had been thinking about how he could help out in other areas than pasta. He hadn't really put much time into thinking about having a helper. The first issue was space and placement. There is about eight feet back there to work. If we are going to be as busy as they say I'm going to need to set it all up so it flows good. His thoughts were interrupted when Ed said, "lastly, I want a final decision on all menu items. If there is anything we are going to add or delete we need to know this week. Also look at your pricing, if we are going to change anything, now is the time."

Harry knew he wanted to put the antipasto in and there were a few items that could use a small price change. He nodded compliance. The meeting ended with Harry walking away smiling.

A little later in the day he called Karen over. "Do you have time?"

She said, "Yeah, I'm caught up. I wanted to tell you that there is a lot of gossip going on within the employees. And it is all good. I've never been a part of anything like this. Everybody is rooting for you Ed."

"Thanks Karen. Have you thought through all that stuff I laid on you?"

Karen said, "Yeah and I took a tip from the master. I involved others in my decision. Ellen and Dorothy were thrilled to be asked. They are working on the opening and closing procedures for me to look at tomorrow. I tried to get them to visualize a night where people were waiting in line for tables all night. We talked about how large a station should be if we want to turn the tables quickly. We came up with six servers and three bussers. We would need two servers and a busboy in the lounge and four and two in the dining room. If we were staffed like that and the food was coming out quick, we could serve a bunch of folks."

Ed said with a smile, "That's great Karen. It's my job to make sure you have kitchen support. We're going to learn as we go but we can move quickly if we know we need another guy here or there."

Karen added, "It's hard to even think like this but weeknights start looking like our Fridays now we should probably have four servers and two bussers. As long as we are cross training we can grab a salad/bread guy if we get slammed or we need to clear a bunch of tables at one time. The lunch thing I think is going to stay pretty much like it is with normal growth. The part you haven't shared with us is how is delivery going to affect table service?"

Ed did that thing with his head, kind of a turn and toss to the back followed by a small shoulder shrug and then said, "You are a smart woman, and it will affect table service. It is just more volume coming out of an already busy kitchen. That's why we've got to get it right. The football part of the marketing is just going to add customers to what otherwise would be relatively slow. That we can handle. The other marketing will create more dining room customers at times that we are already busy plus add in the whole delivery business on top. We've got to get our crap together for that."

Karen said, "Well speaking on behalf of servers and bussers, we will be ready. I noticed you didn't hand off staffing of kitchen guys to anyone else. Who gets that?"

"Yeah, that's me. I need to make sense out of dishwashers, salad/bread/soda people and drivers. These are uncharted waters. I might sink a little until I get it right."

"You'll do great."

Ed added, "Look tonight at 9:00 we are meeting with Leslie to go over what we are doing Monday and the final look for the outside. A lot of it has to do with your dining room, do you want to come?"

"Oh yeah. I'll make sure my station is covered. I really want to be there."

Ed said, "Great, we'll see how it all unfolds."

The meeting ended with Karen going back to work and Ed going to the bar.

Ed took a sip of his freshly poured beer and said, "we're rolling now. I've got Donnie and Karen coming to Leslie's meeting tonight."

Gene paused for a second and said, "What about Harry?"

Ed thought a little and then said, "Very good sir, none of what we are discussing has anything to do with Harry's station. But you're right he should be invited to feel like he's part of the management team."

Gene said, "Well you are cheerleading everybody along. If you don't invite him, he might feel left out. That wouldn't be good."

Ed said "Thank you, I would have missed that one. See that's why we're partners. Let's talk about the bar. You know we need another guy right?" Gene nodded as Ed continued. "I bet the service bar requires one guy by itself even if I have a second register set up in the back to run credit cards and make change on checks from the servers. We've got to get going on this football thing. The season starts week after next."

Gene had a smile like he just got a great report card when he said, "Funny you should mention it. I met with our beer guy. He'll bring in marketing materials four days after I say yes to his proposal which is, he will give us a 20%

discount if we run a beer pizza special featuring his beer. He will supply all the plastic cups, bar naps, signs and posters if we agree. I like the plastic cup idea for a football crowd. What do you think?"

"I love it, how about a large pepperoni pizza and a pitcher for a hot price? My cost is good on that pie and it looks like you just dropped the price on the beer. I think it's a winner. Make the deal. We need to get the press in here. We want the first article to run just before the season opens."

Gene looked up, "First article?"

"Yeah, I think we can get a couple. I'm going to call them up today to see if they want to take pictures on Monday as we are making our changes."

Gene says, "I feel like Robert Redford or Sundance in the Butch Cassidy movie. Remember how he always told Butch 'Keep thinking Butch, that's what you're good at' well that's what I feel like. Do I need to remind you how that movie ended? I don't want to go to Bolivia."

Ed answered, "Come on have faith, we're not going to Bolivia. Besides, I shoot better when I move."

Gene chuckled. He kept thinking what this place looked like just over a month ago. Now we are changing into a whole other gear. It's an adrenalin rush almost every day. Tonight, we have the lovely Leslie, undoubtedly with more surprises. God this is fun.

The meeting ended with blue and red tasks being assigned. Ed started calling the job applicant and scheduling interviews.

Leslie came in at 9:00 as expected. Ed greeted her with a polite kiss as they took seats at the bar and ordered a drink. The first thing Ed reported was the idea of having Donnie and Karen and maybe even Harry at tonight's meeting. She quickly agreed that it was a good idea.

Each section manager made sure their position was covered in case a late customer surfaced. They all, including Harry decided to take over a couple tables in the dining room. Ed knew that Leslie had met everyone except Harry. He made the introductions and then began. "Well, we've got a couple things to talk about tonight. First is preparation for Monday. Leslie why don't you talk us through how you see it."

Leslie quickly took them through what was to be accomplished, by whom and in what order. She had a shopping list for Gene for materials and tools. Gene and Ed were used to Leslie's professionalism and presentation. The other three were a bit awe struck. After her presentation she asked for questions, comments or recommendations.

Karen spoke up, "I hope this is ok, but I have an idea that I don't think would be too expensive." Everyone nodded or encouraged. "I love all your plans. I think the dining room will look so much better but could we build two wall dividers one here and one over here." She had moved to the outside wall that had three windows. She motioned to the area between the first two tables on the window side and between the second and third tables on the other side. "The tables in the middle we have to move around to fit different size parties but these three tables on each side are always kept as four tops. The room is a big box. I think your wall coverings, paintings and lights will definitely soften it up but it will still be a big box. Throwing in these two dividers will break it up a little. Just something simple with maybe a shelf for a plant or some decorative thing."

Leslie was first to speak up, "Let me tell you what I don't like about the idea", Karen lost a bit of her smile that

quickly returned when Leslie finished with “the problem is I didn’t think of it. I love it. Ed, can you build it?”

Before Ed could answer Gene said, “I love the idea too, but I think we should add it to Paul’s list. He’s going to have carpenters here that day anyway. If someone talks to him in advance he could do it with no problem. We’ve got Ed doing enough.”

Leslie said, “Let me sketch something up tomorrow and get it over for you to look at. Especially you Karen. Once we agree I’ll get it to Paul as a change order. OK on to the outside. Donnie, I hear you are heading up the outside painting.”

Donnie said, “Yes I am.”

Leslie said, “OK hook up with Paul to borrow his gun. He will want to take you through some training. I gave Gene the order number for the color we selected. We’ll start with ten gallons just to see how far it goes. I also gave him a list for tape, brushes and rollers. When do you think you are going to start?”

Donnie answered, “Next Wednesday after all of this.”

Gene jumped in with “Watch the overspray. Check the wind and cordon off any parking areas that might be affected. I don’t need to be buying any car paint jobs.”

Leslie added, “The one thing I haven’t got nailed down is the timing for the awning to be installed. If it is up before you finish I want you to tarp and tape it. It’s going to be beautiful and I don’t want it screwed up the first week it’s installed.”

Harry asked, “What awning?”

Leslie responded, “Your timing is perfect. Let me show you.”

She opened up her briefcase and pulled out a color drawing of the front of the building complete with awning and landscaping. A hush came over the crowd that was broken by Gene, “Holy shit.”

Leslie was proud of her rendering. Everyone got out of their chairs to get a better look while murmuring things like “Oh my God”, “Wow, that’s beautiful” and “Is it really going to look like this?”

Ed looked over at Leslie and said, “You are more than a pretty face”.

Donnie goes, “You think? I love the name on the front of the awning”

Karen and Harry just kept looking. Gene popped a tear.

Ed began, “You are the life of this party. Gene and I kind of knew what it was going to look like, but this is over the top.”

Harry said, “I’m so happy I was invited to this meeting. Every day you could see good things coming around here but this. I’m so impressed. I’m just trying to take it all in.

Donnie said, “Shit, I’ve got to paint good if I’m going to be a part of this.”

Leslie proceeded, “About the painting. Here is what I am proposing for the front. Remember the porch is going to be refurbished, we’re going to have a handicap entrance and a really cool awning. I stayed pretty simple with the

changes for the front. I've got simple shutters around both windows and three tables of four on the porch. We need to refinish the door and hang it with all new hardware. I think it should be one of these three colors. You guys pick."

Gene said, "I think it should be the wood color, stain not paint."

Karen agreed saying "It would be hard to pick a color that doesn't clash with the green. Yeah wood."

Ed and Harry were nodding so Leslie concluded, "Stained wood it is. We have lots of years to sand off that door to get it ready to take a stain. It might be cheaper to buy a new door."

Harry actually raised his hand, was recognized and said, "I hobby around with woodwork. I've got the tools. It would be an honor if you would let me sand and finish that door for you."

"Works for me." Ed said.

A few more details were thrown back and forth. The meeting concluded. Harry, Karen and Donnie went to the kitchen as Ed, Leslie and Gene went to the bar.

Donnie looked at the other two and said, "Do you believe what happened there?"

Harry said, "God it is so beautiful. Man, that Leslie has her stuff together. Who does she work for?"

Donnie answered, "That's the funny or tragic part. She couldn't get a job doing this kind of stuff. She runs an insurance office."

Karen said "You're kidding. Did you guys see how I made a suggestion and in three minutes it became part of the plan. I've never had anything happen like that before. They liked my suggestion. I'm thrilled."

They split and went back to checking on closing.

Gene poured drinks for the three of them and then said, "Well little girl, you won the hearts of three more tonight. You're already Supergirl in our books. That rendering made me cry."

Leslie looked at Gene and said, "Aw, that is sooo sweet. I like the way it came out. Look, I'm adding coordinating with Paul on the room dividers to my pink list of tasks."

Ed said, "Yeah great. Can we keep the rendering here? I've got a meeting with a reporter from the Trib tomorrow. A picture tells a thousand words."

Leslie quickly agreed saying "Show it around. I bet lots of people will love seeing it."

Gene said, "Can we get some plastic around it before one of these guys spills his beer on it?"

Ed said, "Good idea. I'll take it to the copy store to get it protected. I'll make some color copies too. I was wondering as people see your work can we promote you somehow or are you restricted by your current job?"

Leslie said, "I investigated that actually. There is nothing in my contract that keeps me from having a design business on the side. I'm making up business cards and registering a company with the county. I would never have gotten around to doing that without you guys. Thanks,"

Gene looks at Ed and says, "She is thanking us."

Ed says, "Yeah I know. Look we are going to get out of here. Tomorrow might be our last normal weeknight. Let the games begin."

"I'll see you in the morning. I'll close up. You two get out of here."

The next day Ed was pretty well caught up so he decided to give the paper a call. He asked for Bill Swan who answered quickly

Ed opened, "Hey Bill, I don't know if you will remember me; I'm Ed Brandon."

Bill came back with, "Sure I remember you with that historical piece on your property. Right now, lots of people know you for what is going on at the Bucket."

"That's why I called Bill. What are the chances of getting a human-interest story on the restaurant?"

Bill responded, "I love it, when are you available?"

"Right now, if you've got the time" Ed said trying not to sound too anxious.

"I can be there in about 40 minutes."

"Sounds great." Ed hung up and went to the bar to tell Gene.

The restaurant was pretty quiet as the last of the lunch dishes were being washed. Gene and Ed were working on paperwork as Bill's car pulled in the lot. When Bill walked in, the first person he saw was Gene.

Bill opened with a "Hi Gene, I hear life has been a little exciting for you lately."

Gene answered with a "I never imagined the place taking off like this. It's been scary but most of all it's been fun. Let me get Ed. You up for a drink?"

"Yeah, this ends my day, I'll have a beer." Bill said.

"Well, my day isn't over, but I'll join you anyway." Gene said with a smile.

Ed came walking in saying, "Bill, great to see you. Thanks for coming out. I hope we can make a story for you."

Bill said, "On the way over here I was thinking about the story. Actually, if you don't mind there might be more than one"

Gene spoke first saying, "Oh I guess we can handle more coverage if you insist."

Ed said, "What are you thinking?"

Bill said, "Well the first is the obvious, the total changeover of the restaurant with new ownership, new menu, new look, and all of that. That alone would be a hell of a story. The next two major issues kind of blend together. You know I love your Thesis on the history of your land. One fact that somehow goes overlooked is that your family has continually served food and drink to this community for over a hundred years."

Gene said, "Jeepers, even I didn't take note of that, but your right Grampa Foster started this restaurant thing before the change of the century. Not this one, the last one."

Ed said with a smile, "Those early meals probably wouldn't stand up to the review of either my brother or I but you're right Foster and Sarah cooked for the early locals but also those folks passing through, first by stage, then by train and then by car. I guess I kind of missed the significance of that. Yeah, my family has been serving folks for a while. Bill, you know I love history, but I hope we are going to focus on today."

Bill interrupted quickly, "No, I know. We're going to spread the word about the Shiny Bucket hard and loud. As we finish though we can move onto this story and further on to your story of the development of this town and the importance of the Rock."

As Gene started to talk Ed looked over with a glance that said, "Don't get him off message with stories about the book". Gene got it and then said, "I think you are going to be fascinated with the shining up of the Rusty Bucket. Check out the rendering of what we are going to look like in a week. The menu and service has taken our customers by surprise. The next two major changes are going to please our guys also."

Bill looked intently at Gene's enthusiasm and asked, "what are they?"

Ed answered, "Full up sports bar and secondly, delivery."

Bill took a sip of his beer as he looked around the bar. "Well, you've got the look, what else?"

Ed said, "Everything. We've got the best video package of any restaurant in the county. We have drink and food specials. Our staff will even be dressed in striped referee uniforms complete with yellow flag. We're even working on a trivia contest with sports history questions. We want to make it fun to watch the game with us. But if you can't, you can still watch the game with our food, and we deliver."

Bill looked at Gene and asked, "How often does he do this to you?"

Gene shrugged and smiled as he said, "All the time. The kicker is he delivers. It is important that you know this, the great new ideas that have more than tripled sales already have come from that head". As he pointed to Ed.

Bill said, "Yeah, I understand, youth is something isn't it? Ed, tell me about the delivery thing."

Ed began, "Lots of restaurants have pick up orders. Moving to delivery looks logical but it's tougher than you think. If you are going to go for a delivery business, you need to commit to it. Much of the delivery is event initiated. Sporting events are a logical example. Not just football, the finals of anything, baseball, hockey, basketball, Olympics, golf etc. When lots of folks are watching tv food becomes a natural. It's a lot of orders all at the same time. You need to have the capacity to cook a hundred extra pizzas, 25 extra pasta orders etc. But it's not just cooking, it's tracking, completing it with all the different parts like salads or drinks and then getting it to a waiting delivery driver who knows how to get there. You need staff, you need training and you need a computer system that can handle it all to include cash management. Fortunately, we have all of that. Many folks don't."

Bill paused a bit and then said, "I never thought about it like that. You really need to prepare to take on delivery. It seems like you prepared to take on all the rest of your restaurant's growth. I guess it is just one more. How have you two been getting along with all the stress of moving your business forward?"

Gene was quick to respond, "It starts out with respect. Ideas are great but the third idea is easier to go along with when the first two hit it out of the park. I don't know what number we are up to, but they all have been winners."

Some ideas are big but often it is the little ideas that make me feel like we are moving in the right direction."

"Like what?" Bill asked.

Gene was quick to answer, " Like the way Ed works with all our people. He manages them but so much more, he involves them. I call it cheerleading, but I guess it's encouragement. Our employees enjoy working here and they promote our business because they feel a part of it. I've never seen it before."

Ed jumped in. "The easiest thing to report on are the physical changes to the building. If you come back on Monday you will see a bunch of that but you will also see our regular employees involved in making their work place better. It really is cool to watch."

Bill said, "It sounds like you are making a "happening" here."

Gene said, "Your sixties are showing, but yeah I would call it that."

Ed wanting to get back to reportable facts said, "Here's our rendering of what we will soon look like."

Bill studied the picture for a while and then said, "This is really nice. Most of this is happening Monday?"

Gene said, "Yeah, that's how we roll around here. All of it won't be done on Monday but there will be significant noticeable change. It would be a good day for a photographer. In fact, it would be a good day for you to visit as well. Our contractor, designer and our employees will be here. There are some good quotes hanging out there with that crowd."

The reporter raised his head and looked to the right while thinking and then said, "Yeah, that should be interesting."

The meeting went on for another 20 minutes or so exchanging facts, dates and goals. When Bill left Ed and Gene went from the table to the bar and had a beer. Ed was the first to speak. "I think that went well. He wants to help us. He and the photographer are coming back on Monday. I don't think we could have gotten much more out of the meeting."

Gene added, "I think he gets the spirit of what we are doing here. He certainly understands the business side and is impressed. I think he is looking deeper than that. Either way it is good."

Ed laughingly jumped in with, "Listen to you. I'm listening to sage remarks coming from my Philosophy professor. The funny part is I agree. I think he gets it and will treat us good."

Gene said, "You have no idea how hard it was not to talk about your book. I saw you looking at me as Bill was serving up history pitches for me to hit but I stayed away. That was tough, but our day will come."

Ed said, "Yes it will. Thank you for talking the walk. We need him to focus on the business this time through. I don't think it will be too tough to fire him up on history, book, whatever a little down the road."

"Ok, I was good. I think as long as we are on the subject of history you should share another slice of the pie."

"Ok I could use a story too."

Ed decided to tell the story as a narrator as compared to making it conversational.

"A couple things we should go over before we get into this leg of the story. Have you ever worked a farm?"

Gene answered, "As a matter of fact I did when I was 14 years old. I spent the summer with my uncle on his farm outside of Chicago."

Ed asked, "What do you remember?"

"It was long, hard and hot. You got up early, you ate a big breakfast and you worked all day in the heat. It sure wasn't an easy life."

Ed continued, "You had electricity, power tools, a truck and other machinery. You had a house, water and a barn. If you needed something you could drive to town and get it, right?"

Gene answered, "I can see this coming, they had none of that."

Ed said, "It's amazing. They had none of that and less. Once they rode to win their land, they had to make something out of it. With the comforts and equipment we have today, we just assume they got their land in April and by the time the first winter settled in they built their home and barn, found and accessed water, cleared the land, planted crops sufficient to feed themselves and all their animals through the winter."

When Foster was acquainted with these realities, he decided that this required some serious thought.

The reality of the plan was setting in. It has always been a hope, no, not even a hope just a dream out there to think about. Now specific plans were being made to grab the dream and hope and make it happen. Foster made two more trips to Stan the butcher to get more education on trimming meat and specifically making sausage. Similarly, Sarah spent another three days at the farm with Martha to pick up on the practical side of cooking, storing, sewing clothes and doctoring.

Foster made a point of finding any settler returning from the West to find out the specifics of their adventure. He soon found out that they didn't call it an adventure more like a nightmare. The numbers were starting to come in saying that many if not most failed at homesteading returning home to family broke and hungry. Many didn't make it back at all. Foster wanted to find out what made all these folks fail.

After meeting with 18 different returning settlers Foster could see what the major problems were. First many didn't have enough money to even try. Yeah, the land is free if you can ride fast and claim it but everything else costs money. Many people forgot there is a winter. If you claim your land in early Spring, then you have at most eight months to prepare food and shelter for you and your animals before the snow has you locked in your home.

It is somewhat easy to build a simple structure if you order all the lumber and other supplies. You merely need to put it together. Unfortunately, many didn't have that skill. If you can't afford that then you must harvest lumber, sod and boulders and create the home. If you can't afford the tools to handle the job then the construction process takes even longer. Many folks could not hunt or harvest enough to feed themselves over the summer. They certainly didn't save up enough to go through the five months of winter and early spring. The extreme problem of building a shelter comes after you find access to water. It could take most of your first year merely finding, digging and pumping sufficient water to sustain life.

Once you have conquered water and shelter you need to think about food. There is no harvest at the beginning. It is easy to think about your spread five years in when you have crops in the fields, animals in the barn, put up fruit and vegetables in the root cellar and a comfortable farmhouse. Now you have raw land.

Nothing makes the point better than raising farm animals. If things were perfect, you would buy little animals of both sexes and feed them with what grows in the ground on your property. As they grew and multiplied you would sell or eat some while keeping the others to increase your inventory. The problem is when you get raw land you really don't know how well it will support your needs in the beginning. If you are lucky you might have enough grazing land to support your livestock for the summer. What about the winter?

It takes a ton of hay and nearly as much grain to sustain one animal. A nice start to a family farm would be three steers, a milk cow, three sheep, three goats, three pigs and a couple dozen chickens. Transportation and working the fields dictate a couple horses and a mule. With this and some husbandry skills you could eat and grow your stock. To support this, you would need over 15 tons of feed. Forget about growing it for a second, think about storing it. You need a silo; you need a barn and you need a bunch of water. For the people you need a shelter and vegetables/fruit to augment your homegrown diet.

If you ever talk to anyone that has plowed a field with a horse drawn plow, he will tell you how much fun that is. Most of that plowing is done to a field that has been plowed every year for some time. In this instance we are dealing with virgin soil that has never been plowed. Every rock or stump that God put there is still there. The first couple years you might choose to plow around these impediments. The problem is you probably found them by running in to them. Plows break and need a forge. That might be thirty miles away. Eventually you build your own forge to repair your equipment and that of your friends.

When you put it all together a lot of people fled in September when they figured out they weren't going to be able to survive their first winter.

Foster's decision was made easier to make when Sarah told him she was with child scheduled for a January birth. He thought, let's take two years to develop. Let's work the property through November and then stay the winter back in the city. There would be lots of construction going on so he knew he could find work. After getting his land he could plan out what he wanted to do. It would still be long days of hard work, but he didn't have to get it all done by the first snowfall. Besides this way Sarah could give birth with people helping other than him. He liked that.

You needed to have money for this plan but they had it. Quite frankly it is tough to do everything you need to do in two years let alone one. If he could get his well in and set his foundations for house and barn it would be a successful start. He would plow enough land for Sarah to have her first garden. That would be good for both of them. She could make her first attempt at growing and canning while he got a feel for how hard it is to plow virgin soil. He knew the second year he would need to prepare ten times the acreage for planting to accommodate feeding the livestock. Where to summer graze and how to deliver water were problems that would be site specific. No matter how you cut it the two-year plan had a far greater possibility of success. He shared all his ideas with Sarah who quickly agreed. The thought of having the baby in town made her feel more comfortable.

This would be their last Buffalo winter. Everything they did or talked about was somehow tied into their upcoming journey. Foster quickly decided that it was easier to tell friends that Poli was coming along because he decided that a good horse is essential, and he didn't want to risk not being able to find one out west. Pretty much everybody knew the truth.

Foster worked through the early spring and all of a sudden the time had come. Much thought had gone into packing. What memorable items and essentials have to be taken? What can I not find out there?

Saying goodbye to Aunt Helen was the toughest part. She promised that she would plan a visit to St. Louis and then to their spread in the upcoming years. She went to the train station to see them off. After a last look out the window Sarah and Foster knew that their adventure had begun

The train trip was boring and uncomfortable. It took ten days to get to St. Louis. Everyday along the way they were able to go see Poli and give her an apple and some love. Just about every other day they got to take her off the train on a couple hour lay-over. Twice they were able to saddle her up and run with her for a couple hours before they all had to return to their rolling cell. Sarah enjoyed reading so she kept herself busy with three books she brought along. Only two were about settling in the West. Foster could read well but didn't really like to. He widdled. Sarah kept asking what he was making but he wouldn't tell until it became obvious. The four foot by eight inch piece of wood became a "WELCOME TO THE HOME OF SARAH AND FOSTER" placard to be hung over their front door. Sarah was thrilled.

When they finally got to St. Louis Foster was unimpressed. The air was dirty. Cynthia, Sarah's cousin, and Brad her husband were waiting. They exchanged greetings. Sarah had not seen Cynthia since she was a little girl. Brad was a good enough person. Foster and Sarah were happy that they had offered up their home for a stopover before they continued to Kansas City. Foster was so happy not to hear the sound of rolling wheels of the train.

They had a nice house with an extra room that was made up for Sarah and Foster. The girls started talking, mostly about Aunt Helen when Brad offered Foster a drink. Foster gladly obliged and sat at the kitchen table while the ladies continued catching up in the parlor. Foster asked about the smell in the air.

Brad responded, "Yeah it has all happened in the last ten years. Everybody likes big companies that hire lots of folks, but they also burn some pretty nasty stuff that makes the air smell bad. We have city government here and they are trying to make the companies fix it but everybody is afraid they will move someplace else and let all the workers go."

"We had some of that in Buffalo, but most of the smokey companies located South of the city. Sometimes you could smell it if the wind was blowing the wrong way. What do you do?"

Brad said, "I'm a clerk for a company that manufacturers farm equipment. You and other settlers are our best customers."

Foster was immediately fascinated. "From what I'm seeing some of these settlers have got more hope than skill. You pretty much know what a guy needs in equipment his first year and probably thereafter."

Brad responded, "Yeah, a lot of people don't know what they are doing. Some of my competitors sell these guys things they won't need for five years, but sometimes they buy. I know what it is like to try to tame 160 raw acres. I know the equipment one needs to make that easier."

"Like what?"

Brad said, "Take plows for instance. We make plows with one to five rails. If you have a riding horse that you intend to work the field with then you better get a one. If you have two sturdy mules then you should have a five rail. Remember it is the number of rails that dictate how much land gets plowed in a given day. Getting away from farming and talking about living, you need a stove. One, it is easier to cook on a stove than on an open hearth.

Two you can put the stove wherever you want to give out heat and last, they use a bunch less wood. You get two or three times the heat out of a stove than a hearth. When you are the guy cutting and splitting the wood that means a lot. We also have the best pumps. We have silos that are pieces that fit inside each other. Each section is four feet high. They start out eight feet across and go down a foot per section. You stack them and hook them to each other. Most people go with 6 sections or twenty-four feet. Two guys can assemble it in an afternoon. Stuff like that."

Foster's eyes were bugging out of his head. "I need a guy like you and one for lumber, building supplies, seeds, livestock and even niceties. There are some bad people out there. If you know a good person or company for all the major expenditures, you are way ahead."

Brad added, "We have an office in Kansas City. I know the guy you should talk to. They are looking for a settler with some business sense that could represent their product to these new customers."

Foster nodded and said, "I'd like that. I'd be pretty good at it. Just sell the good stuff that people really need as compared to selling them everything you've got. I'd like that."

Brad said, "Let me write you a letter to the right person in Kansas City. This could be good for you and my company."

After some more conversation they had a nice homemade dinner followed by a night in a full-sized bed and then a full country breakfast. This is good living. Cynthia and Brad had two horses. Darren walked to work and said he was going to take off at noon. The three of them took off just after breakfast to tour the city. They rode down to the river. When Sarah saw it, her thoughts ran back to her honeymoon. She started telling the stories about Niagara Falls and especially Goat Island. They then road up to Brad's office as he was coming out. Sarah climbed up with Foster on Poli and the four of them headed off for lunch. Their lunch was a roast beef sandwich served hot on a roll with salt baked into it. It came with some potato salad and a piece of fruit. It was great. Foster paid for lunch and demanded that they go for a special dinner as a token of repayment for the hospitality they had been offered.

As the conversation continued it became apparent that Brad wasn't a clerk at his company. Foster didn't know what he really did but he could tell that it was a position of importance. They finished up their ride on a hill that overlooked the convergence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. It was quite impressive when you thought that these two rivers ran through so much of the country and it was here that they met.

When they returned home the men began putting up the horses as the women went in to freshen up. Soon the conversation led to the upcoming land rush. Finally, Brad asked, "Are you afraid at all?"

Foster responded, "I'm not afraid of the race. I have a good horse. I'm already conjuring up a plan. I won't know just what that's going to be until I see the layout of the sites to figure out which ones are the best. I received a letter back from the people running the rush. It appears there are 120 sites being offered up and 156 people participating in the race. 36 people are going home empty. Some of the sites are obviously better than others. Racers will go for the best they can achieve. I'm one of them."

Brad gestures with his hands in a positive way as he said, "God bless you Foster. It takes a special man to do what you are doing. I think it's great. You're going to end up just fine and Cynthia and I look forward to coming to visit your new home. It's exciting."

"From what I've seen and the folks that I've talked to it always starts out exciting. It ends up being a lot of solid

hard work. The good news is that Sarah and I both know how to work. It's even easier doing hard work when it takes you to your dream. Yeah, I think we are going to make it. We will build a family that will enjoy that land for many years to com."

"Amen brother, amen."

Their stay was wonderful, but it was time to move on. The second time doing anything is easier than the first. So it was with packing Poli and baggage for the last leg of the train trip to Kansas City. The three hundred miles took over two days with many stops along the way. Poli got some exercised on two different stops.

When they got to the Kansas City station, they found it to be busy and confusing. Foster was back making sure that Poli joined them while Sarah was trying to get the luggage from the baggage car. This time there was no one to meet them to make it easier. They were on their own. As they found each other they saw a sign for LAND RUSH. They walked up to the table to register. The rush was in three days. What they needed now was lodging. The person at the table checked them in and stated the only rooms left are at the Shamrock. Her look told the story. Not good but all that is left. They found a livery boy with a cart. Foster instructed him to carry the bag and lead them to the Shamrock. He did and they found the Shamrock to be what they expected. They both thought it would only be for two days. They could survive.

The next morning they went to the briefing for the rush. The rules were announced. It was self-explanatory, you couldn't hinder anyone else's ride, you took the red marked stakes at the southeast corner of the property and return same to the official's table. No one was allowed to travel the area before the race and the start would be tomorrow at noon sharp.

A map was displayed showing the 120 sites. Each site was approximately 2,600 feet by 2,600 feet. From the starting line it was an eighth of a mile to the first row of sites. There were 40 sites, each 2,600 feet wide parallel to the starting line. There were 40 additional sites 2,600 feet back and then a third row of 40 sites yet an additional 2,600 feet back.

What was interesting was that there was a significant stream that ran through the totality of the second row. These were the prime sites. Everybody wanted a second-row site. There was one other noticeable issue. The first site on the southern side in the first row was hindered by a rock. It wasn't just a rock, it was a rock. It appeared to be at least 50 feet high. Although kind of round it measured 60 feet by 70 feet. The rock was about 900 feet in from the beginning of the site. The land below the rock had a significant slope to the beginning of the property. So, the problems were many. First, you are never moving that rock, it is just too big. It eats up some of your land. The sloping land beneath the rock gives you problems if you want to plant. The potential big problem is that if you have a rock of this magnitude what is under the land adjacent to it. A smart man would guess you've got many more rocks just under the soil around this big rock potentially for miles. It didn't take long for this site to become the least favorite of all 156 participants.

The night before the race many of the participants were gathered at the tent where the map was on display. Many were drinking. The starting line was as wide as the land being offered. Where you lined up and who you lined up with had a bearing on the competition for particular sites.

Foster's goal was to take the second-row site behind the rock. He knew many people were staying away from the rock. He also knew that the water coming into the area first appeared on this site. If you are downstream, you are subject to whatever people do upstream. That first water site would be perfect. All he had to do was ride through the rock site and grab the stake at the site behind it. This is a good plan.

Foster began talking to some of the other racers. One guy Harrison was a nice guy. He was a little older than Foster and came from Indiana. Another one was named Harold. He was kind of quiet and looked a little nervous. The three of them sat down and had a beer. You could tell that everyone was a little nervous. They looked out over the room and saw a bunch of other guys pretty much like them. All of them were taking a big step that had many risks not the least of which is a race with over 150 people all wanting the same thing. Land.

There was one man that clearly looked different than the rest. He looked Mexican. It was found out later that he was US born with ancestors from Puerto Rico. Some people questioned whether it was legal to have a nonwhite running the race. It had been determined that non-whites were eligible as long as they weren't Indians.

None of the wives were permitted access to this room. It was only for people that would ride. Some folks were getting drunk on the free beer. How stupid is that? Who wants a hangover on such an important morning? After a little more conversation about families and where people were from, they all decided to go home and try to get some sleep.

When Foster returned to the Shamrock Sarah riddled him with questions. He tried to explain everything he had learned at the meeting. She kept pressing him for details on the people he met. While trying to explain everything she kept interrupting with more questions. She was obviously as nervous as everyone else. He finally got through it all and they went to bed. Sleep was illusive.

The next morning, they woke up early and went to a restaurant for breakfast. First Foster and Sarah groomed Poli. They wanted her looking pretty for this big day.

This special day started out like many with Foster looking at the rising sun. Initially he didn't even know where East was until the sky started changing colors announcing the start of a new day. The view to the East had nothing on the ground getting in the way of the sun's arrival. Way out in the distance Foster could see the beginning of it all. It was a cloudless day. There was nothing to look at other than the rising sun. It was weird but the dew on the ground reflected the sun's first rays. It was almost like watching a sunset over water. That look didn't last long as the sun rose. You could feel the warmth on your face grow as the sun's rays struck you more directly. It was a new day, and this was going to be a big one.

They made it over to the starting area and were amazed at the crowd. You had all the racers but you also had their supporting friends and family. Foster was surprised at the number of people who intended to race while driving a wagon. A wagon even if drawn by multiple horses can't out run a man on horseback. More importantly, the land was rough. A wagon going full speed can't maneuver around obstacles like holes or mounds. Foster could picture many wagons flipping over in the race. The official starter stood on a raised platform with a photographer who wanted to capture this moment in history. The platform was centered along the line of offered properties. For some reason most of the contestants were gathered near the platform. Foster, with a few others were located far down the line to stay out of the masses. When folks are all bunched up like that somebody is going to fall and you might plow into them and fall. Foster knew he didn't want to be in the crowd. One of the others with him was Harrison the man he met the night before.

Without much ado, the gun went up and fired signaling the start.

Chapter 17 THE LAND RUSH - THE PRESS INTERVIEW, THE SHINING OF THE BUCKET

Everyone survived a busy weekend, but the focus was certainly on preparation for Monday. As planned Gene

showed up at 7:30 am to open up for Pauli and his guys. Ed showed up at 8:00 with Leslie and everyone else arriving at 8:30. Leslie had taken a vacation day from work so she could be there for all of it. Things just started happening. Pauli's crew split up to work on different things. Four of them immediately tore out both bathrooms so the plumber could get in there to start running his lines. Ed saw the air conditioning team only at the beginning. They climbed up on the roof to receive the new ac unit that was being lifted into position by a back hoe. When they had it all hooked up and tested, they left.

The same backhoe was then used to excavate the new landscaping island. A skilled man took about six bites out of the black top and dropped the stuff into a waiting truck. Then they left. Pauli had both of these teams working elsewhere for the afternoon. The electrician was doing his thing whatever that was as the carpenters were taking final measurements for the two room dividers and back shelf for the dining room.

The local crew was taking on the dining room as well. The dining room has an emergency exit. Donnie and Elery carried about half of the tables outside to the parking lot. The rest of the tables were moved to the center of the room. The first order of business was to draw a line where the center of the new chair rail was to be placed. That is usually a pain in the ass job but the carpenter Ken set up his laser light that cast a beam at exactly the right location. Ed and Gene simply went around the room making a pencil mark every six inches or so. They then tarped the room.

Everyone was so concerned that Ed was going to have too much to do. It ended up he had nothing to do. He decided to manage and worry. He was better at the latter. Pauli's guys all knew what to do. Ed knew to leave them alone. Harry was quick to remove the front door and load it up on his truck. He told Ed on the way out that he would have the door back that afternoon ready to be stained.

Donnie and Ellen and Karen and Elery made up the two painting teams. Each one had a roller and a cutter working a two-inch brush. The tarp was well placed and secure. They each understood to paint up to a little short of the pencil line. It was moving along well. Leslie had selected a quality paint so the job should require only one coat. Ed was measuring the walls for cutting the chair rail. Leslie was on the roof.

When Ed heard where Leslie was, he quickly quit the chair rail thing to make sure Leslie was safe. There was almost ten inches of an almost flat roof before you got to the foot of the sign. Leslie was perched there with a quart of paint and two small brushes. Ed didn't like this at all, but he knew he had no hope of changing her mind. He just sat there and fidgeted.

Leslie had prepared for this task. She had already created a scale size painting of the sign and the changes she was about to make. She tried three different versions of the cross out of RUSTY and the add in of SHINY. She finally settled on the one she liked. Once she had it in her mind, she knew exactly what she was going to do once she got up to the sign. It took about ten minutes and looked perfect. She climbed down to the applause of Ed and others.

Lots of work was getting done as it approached 11:00. Ed called his landscape buddy and arranged for an afternoon delivery of the fill for the island. He then called a quick huddle of Gene, Leslie, Paul, Donnie and Karen. Everybody gave a quick progress report on their areas of interest. No new surprises yet. The painting and chair rail thing were on schedule. The air conditioning was done. The plumbing fixtures needed about an hour to complete. After that, the new stalls could be put in. It would take much of the afternoon to get the bathrooms ready for paint.

Paul reported that the electric upgrades were complete and then asked Leslie. "Your new dining room lighting, you want control to go over to this panel?"

“Yeah, that would be great.”

Paul answered, “OK get me your lights. I want my electrician to wire them up before he goes. You’ll be able to spread them later. I’ve also got my finish carpenter working on your room dividers. He’ll also be doing your shelving on the back wall. What’s your wall finish behind the shelves? Whatever it is, it would be good if you had that done before he hangs those shelves.”

Leslie responded, “We will. Give me a couple minutes with these guys and then we will get on it.”

Everyone knew how the overall plan was moving along. They quickly decided on wall finish for the shelf wall and assigned the task to Donnie. Ed took a quick count of the number of people working on site and went to the kitchen to make lunch. Gene followed.

Ed turned on the pizza conveyor as Gene went to the salad station to put together a big Caesar. Ed spun up and put topping on four pizzas and put them in the conveyor. They looked at each other in silence. They knew they were both thinking the same thing like, it’s going great, when is it going to fall apart. Without saying a word, they just looked at each other smiled and shook their heads. Just then Bill Swan arrived.

Ed and Gene introduced Bill to everyone as they announced that pizza and salad will be up in five minutes.

Bill had his notebook out and made sure he had everyone’s name spelled right as he talked with them. Ed and Gene set up the food in the bar with plates, glasses and napkins. Everyone was ready for a food break. Ed and Gene tried to stay away from Bill as he interviewed people. Paul’s guys were happy to get a free meal. Ed quickly went back and fired up two more pies.

Bill even interviewed Paul. When he got on to Leslie, Ed decided to join in.

Ed asked Bill, “How’s it going? Are you getting what you need?”

“OH yeah. The only question is when do you serve the Jones juice?” Bill asked with a laugh.

“I promise we haven’t brainwashed anyone. Well maybe Leslie here but nobody else.”

Bill said, “Well maybe not but I’ve got to tell you they love their job, they love this place and even more so, they love you and Gene. Whatever you are doing keep doing it. I had one girl brag about how she had an idea that was good enough to be used in your plan. Another one, Dorothy is working on her own time, on your menu design and is nervous it won’t be good enough. I didn’t need to ask them about the improvements. One guy, Donnie walked me around and showed me what you are doing in each spot, to include the new awning and landscape island. They all actually left their pizza and walked outside to make sure I got how the awning was going to look. They brought the rendering with them to make sure I understood.”

Leslie started laughing. “Gene and I understand how unusual, no, how special this is. Ed, who is responsible for what you are seeing thinks it is no big deal. He just believes this is what happens when you treat people with respect.”

Gene had walked up while Leslie was talking and said, “Yeah, I think he’s a genius for seeing the potential and making the physical changes and menu changes to make it happen. But that’s nothing compared to what he has done with the staff. It’s almost freaky. Don’t quote me on that part.”

Bill said, “OK I won’t but two nameless people referred to a book you are writing that will comprise a number of

stories that you have been sharing with Gene.”

Gene looked at Ed and said, “We’re busted.”

Ed said, “OK, my bad. You know how important the Bucket is to Gene and I and everyone else here. We really need a good article to help drive out two new business ideas. Sports Bar and Delivery. I didn’t want to risk needed coverage on that by getting lost in a book down the road.”

Bill looked up, smiled and said, “I can walk, chew gum and even hum a tune at the same time. But I understand. I promise you an article better than what you are hoping for. How’s that? But you’ve got to tell me a little about the book.”

Ed looked at Gene as Gene looked at Ed. They both smiled and shrugged their shoulders when Leslie spoke up. “Tell you what Bill. I’ll give you a third hand understanding of what is going on with the book. Gene, Ed, if you think I missed anything add it is at the end. Alright?”

The three nodded.

“You remember the thing with Ed’s dad. At the end of that mess Ed ended up owning the Rusty Bucket with Gene holding a mortgage and leasing it back for three months. When it all came down Gene suggested to Ed that he might be interested in partnering up in the future. No details discussed.

The guys new each other but not well. They met and began talking. In the conversation it came up that Ed was a writer of sorts and did his senior thesis on the history of his family land. Gene became really interested. Ed was trying to stay focused on the business opportunity, but Gene kept wanting to know about the history.

Ed then told his first story to Gene, the one about the Indians that predated his family. Gene went over the top. Ed gave him a copy of the Thesis that you have read and scheduled another meeting trying to get to the business at hand. The Bucket. By the time they met again Gene had read a few more stories. Gene then begged, I’m not kidding, Ed to tell him another story. Ed obliged.

Now Gene had read a couple stories and listened to the same stories from the horse’s mouth. He liked what he read but loved what he heard. Meanwhile Ed kept trying to make a deal on the restaurant. Finally, Gene came back with an offer that was simultaneously stupid and brilliant. Gene made a financially good offer if and only if his new partner continued to change his thesis into a book that they would own together. Ed thought Gene was overvaluing the book and placing the business at risk by demanding that Ed continue to write while taking on all the tasks necessary at the Bucket. Gene said he didn’t care and that it would be the only deal he would make.

Ed then agreed if Gene would help. Ed would continue to tell the stories of his family while they were working on the restaurant. The restaurant would be the place from which the book was born. So, at the end of business conversations about menu changes and pizza conveyors they would flash back to a story about Ed’s Great grandfather before the Land Rush.

All the things that happened in the development of this place are in the book along intermittently with stories of the history of this land. The back and forth is beautiful. Gene and I think Ed has a best seller and Ed hopes he has a successful restaurant. Is that about it guys?”

Ed and Gene looked at each other and nodded.

Bill said, “You’ve got to be shitting me?”

Ed quickly said, "That's why I didn't want to go here. He's going to write an article about two partners who are too stupid to run a pizza parlor."

Bill jumped in, "I will not. I promised you a great article and I will deliver. Down the road I promise you another great article or two. I won't mess this one up. I promise. You are really doing all this stuff at the same time?"

Gene quickly added, "In my defense. Story telling has kind of turned into therapy. As you can imagine things get going long and hard around here. At the end of a hard day to pour a cold one with your partner and have a story, is cool and cheaper than a shrink. It is good for the giver and receiver. OK maybe better for the receiver. But good either way."

Ed added, "There is actually some truth in that. I record our sessions to get the dialogue, but I don't need to transcribe right away. With everything that has been going on lately I'm about four stories behind, but I'll catch up"

Leslie says, "Slacker. Ok, back to the job at hand. What else do you need for your article and what day is it coming out?"

Bill answered with, "I think I've got enough to do you up proud. I have a copy of the rendering and all my notes. Phil my photographer is coming by about now. I'll wait to make sure he gets the pictures I want. As far as date is concerned our best circulation is on Wednesday. If your official Grand Opening is this weekend, I'll have it in Wednesday. If you are waiting until next week so will I. Either way I'll cover the football thing that really begins next week. What do you want?"

Gene looked at Ed, "Well, are you staffed up? Inventoried up?"

Ed Said, "Yeah"

"How about training?" Gene Asked.

"Almost there" Then Ed added, "You know we've been ahead of ourselves through everything we've done. Why stop now?"

Gene added with a smile, "Have faith, right? Let's pull the trigger. Bill, make it this week."

Bill answered, "Well that's appropriate, here's Phil to take the pictures." Bill then stood up shook everyone's hand and said "I wish you every success. I mean that."

Gene went to check with Paul on bathrooms and awning. Ed went to the dining room to see how that was coming along. The painting was done and looked great. The pieces of chair rail were all cut ready for installation. It was now time for wall coverings. The tables were set up in the middle of the room per Leslie's instruction to best serve the laying out, cutting and pasting procedure. Leslie had all her specialty tools set up as well. The good news was that Karen, Ellen and Donnie all like playing with the wallpaper. Ed was happy to watch from a distance.

Donnie had two ladders set up. Once each piece was measured, cut and prepared, it would be handed up to Donnie and Leslie on the ladders. They would place it complete with final slides up, left, oh down a little. With the top being secured the bottom was maneuvered into place by Karen and Ellen below. Leslie came down the ladder on the first two placements to check on the ladies' work. After two she knew they had it. It moved along quickly except for the two windows. You could tell that Leslie had done a bunch of this before. The windows barely slowed her down. The rest of the crew was quite impressed. They didn't finish until after 6:00 but it looked so

good.

Paul's carpenters were real pros. Things were getting finished before Ed even noticed they were started. They replaced two boards on the porch, power sanded and painted it all in less than two hours. While that was being done two other guys put in the ramp. Both bathrooms were done ready for paint. Both room dividers were done and stained waiting for the wallpaper to be done so they could be installed. The only major project to be done was the awning. It appears that wasn't so major after all.

When Leslie had asked Paul if he wanted to install the awning he said. "You know I can do it and probably save a couple hundred bucks. Because we only have one day that the restaurant is closed, I've got my whole crew there. Let the awning guys put it up"

So, at 3:30 the awning truck pulled up. Four guys got out with all the right tools to install what they install all the time. Two hour later it was up and looking great.

Harry had returned with the door early in the afternoon. He and Gene stained it and set it to dry. When the awning guys were done Harry, Gene and one of Paul's carpenters hung the door with its shiny new hardware.

At 6:00 Paul and all of his guys were finished and packing up. Just then Ed's landscaping friend pulled up with the fill for the island. Gene said, "Oh shit. Did Paul's guy run the line to the landscape island?"

Ed looked at Leslie and motioned. She said, "I don't know" All three of them looked over to the other side of the parking lot and saw Paul. Without saying anything Paul knew the question and the answer. He nodded back.

Everybody just appeared outside. Nobody was saying anything just looking at what had been accomplished. Finally, it was Donnie who broke silence. "I don't believe we got all of this done. Have you seen the bathrooms? They're great."

Karen jumped in with, "Hey that dining room of ours looks pretty hot too."

Gene looked over and said, "Yes and yes. But this outside is making me cry all over again."

Ed said, "OK, but before we get all nostalgic, what do we need to get done and how much of that needs to get done tonight?"

Leslie answered. "The dining room needs the pictures and plants to be hung. We need to hang the new lighting. That should be done tonight. We need to fill the new shelves and room dividers. That's later on. The bathrooms need a good vacuuming. We need to check the new paint to see if we need another coat. Outside we need the shutters up on the windows. If we have the strength it would be great if we could paint the front of the building. Lots of people are going to look at the new "us" tomorrow. It would be cool if the front had a finished look."

The response was immediate and universal.

Gene said, "OK it looks like we are painting for a little while. We still have some clean up and put away work to do. How about if we leave our menu for a while? I'm going over and get a big bunch of BBQ beef sandwiches from Thom's BBQ and a mountain of french fries."

Ed added, "Make half of them pork and half beef."

Gene saw heads nodding in agreement and said "Cool. When I get back I'll make the drinks."

Everyone got on the chores right away.

With six people painting, the front was finished off in forty minutes. In that same time the bathrooms were inspected and approved. The plants were placed and the pictures hung. The last task was to hang the lights. Leslie decided to wait for dinner. She said to Ed, "We'll sit everyone in the dining room for the sandwiches and drinks. While we are eating we will experiment with different looks with the lights. Everyone will be involved in the final look."

Ed smiled and said, "You are the best."

"I've had a good teacher."

Gene came back with bags of sandwiches and fries. Ed and Leslie were leading him to the dining room. They had moved all the chairs and tables back into position. Gene couldn't believe how good it all looked. He put down the bags and just stood there for a minute or so just staring. Ed was getting the plates and silver. Gene finally yelled out "if I could find a waitress maybe I could get a drink order."

"On the way boss." As Ellen got her pad out and took orders.

People were settling in with food and drink in front of them as Leslie said. "The last thing to do is hang the lights. I thought we should try a couple different looks. I've got temporary hooks to help us set it up for now. Don't worry if we have too many or too few lights, we can fix that. Just experiment with what feels good to you."

Everyone was munching on their sandwich as they looked around. Everyone was also wondering who would be the first to try it. It was a bit of a surprise to all when Elery got up and grabbed the end of the light string. As he did he said, "I first wondered if I wanted to start at the entranceway or at the first divider. I finally decided on the divider." He placed the first light at the wall and divider. He then came out the divider and made a scallop back to the next window. He recruited Donnie to help him place the lights. He continues across the back wall at the top of the wall then duplicated his first design on the second side of the room. When he stopped everyone clapped.

Next up was the team of Karen and Ellen. Donnie stayed on as helper. Their idea was to start at the entrance to the dining room. Their plan wasn't much different than Elery's except that it continued to both sides of the entrance.

Dorothy then approached the plate. Her idea was simple and different. She also started at the entrance but she skipped the dividers altogether. She went to the back corner and then came back to the center of the room. With the help of a ladder Donnie hung a hook from the ceiling tile grid. The lights were hung there and then went back to the other back corner. From there she went to the entranceway the way she had with her opening leg.

The first two teams were the ones to lead the applause. Karen said, "Yeah, that's it". Others quickly agreed. The only thing to do was grab another sandwich and a drink.

Gene looked at Ed and said, "You're brilliant"

Ed said, "Don't blame me, this was Leslie's idea."

Gene then addressed the group. "You guys have been great today. Hell, you've been great every day, but today sure was special. Tomorrow we get to show off our new digs. I can't wait. The day after tomorrow the newspaper article comes out. I hope that turns out well. We'll see. What I do know is that in about 16 hours some great food is going to be cooked and served by some great people to some great customers. If you want to stay for some

more food or drink feel free. I'll probably be here another hour or so. Get some rest. Thank you again."

Smiles still filled the room. Everyone picked up after themselves. People made last minute checks of their areas making sure that they were ready for tomorrow's customers. Everybody made a point of saying goodbye before they left. Then it was the three of them. They took their spot at the bar as Gene refilled their drinks.

Finally, it was Leslie that said. "Well, other than that how was your day?"

The three of them started laughing and couldn't stop. Finally, Ed got in control enough to say, "Nothing special, how about yours?" That started it all over again. This time they all exhaled, took a sip of their drink and Gene said, "I knew what was supposed to happen, but I can't believe it actually happened. Have you looked at this place? The Bucket is beautiful!"

Ed extended his hand between the two of them and said, "She certainly is." Gene and Leslie were quick to place their hands on his and say collectively, "To the Bucket". With their free hand they grabbed their drinks and toasted.

Special stories were told of many different memorable acts. Harry with the door, Dorothy with the lights and Paul with the nod from the other side of the parking lot saying that yeah, I remembered to run the line to the island. Ed's favorite was when the employees decided without a hesitation that they were painting the front before they went home.

All of this story telling led to another drink. Leslie then said, "I have a favor to ask".

Gene and Ed said instantly, "Anything."

"I want a story."

Ed quickly looked at Gene and said, "Did you put her up to this?"

"I didn't."

Leslie jumped in and said, "He didn't. I just think it's special what you guys have. I wanted in on it."

Ed said, "It's ok. It is better than ok. Today has certainly been one of the best days of my life. It seems only fitting that today we tell the story of..."

Gene interrupted loudly "Land rush. Yes finally, Land rush. I've been waiting for the land rush since Buffalo. No since Indians. Yes, the land rush is finally here. Yes." As Gene was saying all of this he was dancing around like a kid. He clapped his hands, raised fists in the air, twirled around.

Leslie looked at Ed then Gene and asked, "Are you alright? Did you hurt yourself today?"

Ed looked at Leslie and said, "He's all right, more or less. He's trying to make a point that he has been waiting for this installment of the story for quite a while. If he has concluded his theatrics we can actually get on to the story."

Gene laughed and said, "Alright, alright tell the story."

Ed began. "Ok I'll do it like they do on TV when they have a two-part story. They start with a review of last week's show, so you are more or less up to date for this episode. In our last episode Foster and Sarah had arrived at the site of the land rush. They found accommodations. After registration Foster (only racers were aloud) went to a

pre-race meeting.

There was a map of the 120 sites that were available. The sites were each about 2,600 feet wide and a half mile deep. The map showed the preponderance of water in the second row of sites hence making them more desirable. The map also showed the first site to the South had this huge rock that would cause numerous problems for planting. The presence of such a big rock also brought fear that the balance of the site would be full of rock as well. This was clearly the site that no one wanted.

At the meeting Foster met a few people. Most were about his age, some older. All were white save one of Mexican descent. Native Americans were not allowed. Some men were getting drunk on the free beer being offered. Ed tried to get some sleep but found little.

The next day the crowd at the race starting line was huge. You had all the racers with their families and well-wishers, and folks from town who just wanted to watch what they thought was going to be carnage. The starting line was 6,000 feet wide but most of the racers gathered around the tower for some reason. Foster was way down to the South. He noticed Harrison was there as well. Foster figured that Harrison thought out his race plan like Foster.

Foster looked back and saw Sarah. She stood there with her hands and arms slightly outstretched making a gesture that clearly said good luck and I love you.

The gun went off and then the real noise began. The screams of encouragement from the crowd blasted over the rider's yells to their horses. Foster was focused on the land ahead of him. Poli was running great. Foster somehow felt that Poli knew how important this ride is. Just then out of the corner of his eye Foster saw the accident. As predicted one of the wagons flipped over hitting another wagon racing alongside. That one flipped as well. The accident site was so wide that it took down four other riders as well. Later Foster found out that two men had died in the mishap. The tragedy for Foster was that in that one second lapse of attention Foster missed a small natural trench in front of him. Had he or even Poli noticed they could have jumped it with ease. Poli stumbled and fell.

Foster didn't pass out but came pretty close. Poli appeared to be ok. Foster took a couple breaths and began to raise himself up to mount up. He couldn't feel his left leg. He had lots of pain in other parts of his body but he couldn't feel his left leg. Poli tried to encourage Foster to get up. Foster screamed silently to himself. "It can't end like this. All this time, all this work to come this close, oh my God I can't believe I have failed."

Again, Foster tried to mount Poli but couldn't raise the strength to pull himself up without the push from legs that worked. After one last feudal effort Foster fell to the ground in disgust.

Just then Foster could hear an approaching horse. He looked up and saw Harrison. Foster wanted to say something but didn't know what. Harrison said, "let's get you on that horse." Harrison then lifted Foster up and threw him over Poli's saddle. He grabbed the reigns and ran off at a pace that all could handle. It was only about four minutes to the first site. Harrison led Poli and Foster to the stake, helped him down and said, "This is as far as I can carry you, stay put I'll come back to get you once I stake my claim."

Foster wanted to gush thank yous at Harrison but knew he had more important things to do. Foster was still inventorying his own lumps and bruises. My God I have a claim. I own land. He laid back down, closed his eyes and started to regain normal breathing. As he opened his eyes and turned his head to the left he saw it. There it was, sticking up out of the ground as big as one of those buildings back in St. Louis. Foster now owned the Rock."

Leslie was first, "God that's a good story"

Gene said, "I've been waiting for this story for months. It was worth it. I knew you, I mean your folks ended up with the Rock and I knew Poli fell, but I didn't know that part with Harrison. What a great guy."

Leslie agreed, "Yeah it's almost easy to do a good deed when it doesn't cost you anything, but he was in a race. Every second counts at a time like that. I hope we hear more from him in the future."

Ed said, "You will. Where are we with all of this?" pointing to the Bucket.

Leslie said, "I took off tomorrow so I can quarterback what still needs to be done. You guys need to start thinking about how you are going to be able to handle the rush that's coming. If that article is any good you are in for a roller coaster ride. So, everything about the building is a pink task now. OK?"

Ed interrupted, "I really can't leave you here in the story. Harrison came back for Foster as promised. By then Foster was already on the mend. He was bleeding in a few places but nothing serious. The real problem was his leg. He didn't think it was broken but he knew it hurt. He could ride with extreme discomfort, but he still couldn't mount up. It sank in with Foster that had it not been for Harrison he would have nothing. It also sank in that he had the site that nobody wanted.

When they got back to the starting line Sarah could tell there was trouble. She ran over and began asking a million questions. Once Foster slowed her down, he was able to tell her the story about the ride, the fall, the rescue by Harrison and the injuries he had picked up. Oh yeah, he told her that they ended up with the Rock.

Sarah had no problem with the rock if Foster was well. Sarah asked Foster to point out Harrison and his family so she could thank them for saving her husband. With each moment Foster's injuries were getting better. Foster asked Sarah to give Poli a good lookin' over to make sure she didn't have something wrong that he had missed.

Sarah and Foster went over to the registration table to turn in their flag and file their claim. Foster then said, "You know once I'm up I'm ok. I sure would love to see what we've earned."

Sarah said, "Are you sure your good enough to ride?"

"Yeah, we are in no hurry. I just want to look it over."

They set out while Foster told the story how he looked away when those wagons flipped. "I wasn't paying attention for a couple seconds which was just when Poli hit this mound. She went down, I went up, I went down, it was horrible. Poli tried to help me up, but I couldn't do it. After my last try I fell. Then I heard Harrison. What a guy."

By now they were clearly on their land. They looked over and saw some riders approaching. It was Harrison and his family. Foster waived both hands with joy. Harrison and his wife rode over and introduced themselves. Sarah threw out a string of thank yous that had no end. Harrison's wife Della was happy and proud of her husband. You could tell that Della was with child also. They decided to inspect their claims together.

Foster said, "Well I guess you are my neighbor to the West."

Harrison responded, "Actually yes. I've got some good news for you. Remember how the map showed the water

sites being in the second row. You and I were both trying to grab the first two sites in that row.”

Foster replied, “Yeah, I know. I’m thankful I have a site at all. I just hope I can dig a well and get enough water to take care of our needs.”

Harrison had a big smile when he said, “Sometimes maps are wrong. It is true that most of the water is in that second row, but it starts out on the first site.... Yours.”

“Are you kidding me? I’ve got water back here.”

Just then the four of them rode up on this stream. Harrison pointed over the stream to a tree about 150 feet beyond the water. “That’s the marker for the next site. This stream runs through the totality of your claim. The stream keeps moving East. In a couple hundred feet it becomes the border between your land and mine. We’ve both got water.”

Foster looked at Sarah and said, “This changes everything. Knowing that we already have water lessens the load at the beginning. We’ve got some planning to do. This is going to be so much fun. Harrison, I build houses so I know construction of all kinds. This laying out a farm is something I’ve never done. Are you any good at it?”

“Well, I helped my brother lay out his new place in Indiana. You really must think it through. The thing he taught me is to picture your home four years from now. Think about what you are going to be growing. Think about how much livestock you are going to have. Are you going to have any farm hands? What’s the whole area going to look like then? How big of a family home are you going to have? Are you going to have a meat butchering area? How much hay and grain will you need to get through the winters that lies ahead. It’s a lot of stuff but if you know what you think you want down the road then that make your early improvements fit in that bigger layout.”

Foster had always thought that he was smarter than most of the other homesteaders that he had met. He now realized there is a lot of stuff that he doesn’t know. It was humbling but also exciting. Foster could see that Harrison, Sarah and Della all felt the same way. These look like lasting friends.

Ed concluded by saying, “That’s probably a good place to stop for a while. OK, Leslie has volunteered to take over most or damn near all of building things. Gene you’ve got to close your beer distributor on stuff for football. I know you interviewed one more bartender you might need to get another one. We’ve all got to change our inventory levels. I’ve got lots of interviewing to do. I need to get organized on the training. I need Dorothy’s menu to edit. I need to streamline pick up orders. I need to put together the marketing piece for hand delivery. Oh yeah, I need to create the procedures for delivery.”

Gene and Leslie both looked over at Ed and said, “Get on it.”

CHAPTER 18 THE ARTICLE WAS AMAZING - LET’S CHANGE THE PLAN

The next day started early. People already knew some of the things they had to do. Ed had made some phone calls to schedule a 9:30 meeting with all management leaders and Dorothy. Everybody was on time and ready. Ed started with Dorothy. He asked, “How’s the menu coming along?”

She opened her briefcase and pulled out multiple copies of the black and white draft. As she was handing them

out, she said, "I think I have all the product and price changes everyone wanted. I hope you like the overall design. If everyone could sign off on the changes then I can tweak the colors. I'll then pull about 5 copies for everyone to take their final look at. I've already set it up with the printer to make the menus tonight, ready for a Wednesday use. I'm thinking 100 copies. It's a two-sided print. Minimally I think they should be laminated. With another cost boost you can get clear plastic "folders" for lack of a better word. They look pretty and they offer an inside back margin section. It's two and a half inches wide. If you wanted to offer a promotion you could print up whatever you like and place it the margin. I have the entire menu on a file on my computer. I'll get one over to the house computer as well. The black and white copies you want for your flyer package should probably be made at the printer as well. You are going to want over 1,000. They can hit a button and it's done. Later on if we want to make 100 or so we can do those on our copier if we like. Anyway, I hope you like it."

As Dorothy was describing her project everyone else was studying the design and checking for corrections. Finally, it was Donnie who said, "Dorothy this is ex. Because I did it last time, I know how hard and time consuming it is. I think your design is great."

Harry was next with "It works for me. Your prices are correct, and the look is beautiful."

Karen then said, "Ditto. Great job."

Ed looked at Dorothy and said, "Well done. Because we have the file if I want to change the price on something we can go in, change and print."

Dorothy responded, "Yes, but remember I'm guessing we need at least 100 per run. It might not be worth raising the price ten cents on something if you need to spend a couple hundred on a new batch."

Ed said, "OK anybody need any other changes to the menu? If not proceed ahead. Let's go with 125 menus with the folders. And let's go with 1,500 black and white copies. In as much as you are doing this can I lay another one on you. We don't know what the Trib article is going to look like. We think it will say nice things, but we don't know physically how big it will be. When it comes out could you crop it into a two-sided letter size for copying. We will certainly have full size articles around here, but I need one altered to fit into this marketing package. At the printer I have our fridge magnets. We need to look at the whole package we are assembling. So far it is a 2 page menu, 2 page Trib article and a magnet. Maybe we need something else with big letters promoting football and delivery. Either way Wednesday night we will be assembling the packages for delivery. I need three or four teenagers who want to make a couple bucks. I'll pay a dime a copy for delivery. I need honest kids who won't throw them away. Anything else on that one?"

Ed said, "OK everybody. This is the lull before the storm. We are going to overstaff this week so we can get our training in. I want everyone to feel a part of what is going on here. We know we are going to be busy. We are going to serve great food with great friendly service. Our marketing is going to give us customers we never had before. How well we perform determines whether we serve them again. Any questions?"

A hand went up from a new person in the back. Ed pointed at him and said, "Neal, right?"

Neal answered, "Yes sir. I had my final interview on Saturday, at this table I think. What happened here?"

Everybody started laughing. Ed noticed that all the people that were a part of the remodel were looking at each other with a smile. Finally, Gene said, "Well Neal, we made a few changes since last you were here. We had a quality designer, a quality construction crew, quality craftsmen, and some quality persons from this restaurant who worked together on shining up the old Rusty Bucket. Would everyone who worked on this project please

stand and be recognized.”

Donnie jumped up, followed quickly by Karen, Harry and the rest. It looked like the end of Spartacus. Gene and Ed were the last to stand. Applause took over the room.

Ed broke in and said, “We look pretty, now let’s show them what we can do.”

The meeting broke up with lots of small conversations taking place everywhere. The new guys were asking the veterans how it was to work here. The veterans were telling stories. It was all very cool.

Gene looked over at Ed and said, “They look like their charging on the football field, ready to win one for the home team.”

Ed said, “Have you been hearing that?

“What”

“Horns honking. I didn’t much notice the first couple, but it keeps happening”

Gene paused for a moment, heard another horn and then said, “That’s our neighbors tipping their hat”

Ed went to the door and saw the next honker who also waved his arm out the window as much as saying “good job”. Ed looked at Gene and said, “Well, I didn’t expect that.”

Just then Leslie pulled up, right behind her was an oversized pickup truck filled with plants. She came running in, didn’t even stop to say hello and continued on to the dining room. She paused, looked around and then said to everyone standing there, “Yeah, I wanted to make sure I didn’t dream it.”

Everybody started laughing when she interrupted with “hey I need a guy or two to help me unload the truck” Nothing else was said. The truck was unloaded as the staff paused again, looking at what was going to happen next.

Ed carried her a cup of coffee and delivered same with a kiss. “A lot of folks have been pinching themselves to make sure this really happened.”

Leslie continued with a smile, “Gene called me a bit ago. It appears we have a problem with noise pollution.”

“Yeah, I can cope. It appears you have a little landscape project on your agenda.”. Ed said.

Gene walked over saying, “Yes we do. I like this part. First we have to build the border and place the lights.”

Ed asked, “Talk me through the light thing.”

“We’re dropping in four light fixtures. Two to shine on the building and two more to light up the garden. Paul said to put them where we think we want them and that he or one of his, will be over late afternoon to wire them up. We’ll make the final adjustments after sunset.”

“Why don’t I give you a youngin’ for the heavy stuff?” Ed suggested.

Gene said, “Yeah, give me that Neal guy. He looked eager earlier”

The pink quarterback started the ball rolling. Ed went back inside to work on his list of stuff to do. He started with

a call to Larry the computer guy at Henry's place. He told him he was going to need three more monitors. He thought he knew what he was doing but wanted to check with Larry before he screwed something up. As anticipated Larry said he would be by this afternoon with the equipment. Next was the call to the phone lady. He needed four more phones and two more lines opened up. To complete this project he would need a table/shelf and a very big map.

At this point Ed realized that he was finally moving forward with the creation of the "delivery business." He had been thinking about this forever but now he was finally making it happen. Even Gene and Leslie were in the dark about how this was going to work. Kicking this one off would be complicated enough but doing it when everything else was taking flight should eliminate all chances of boredom.

First, we needed the apparatus. Some level of marketing would create some number of phone calls. So you needed phone lines, phones and computers to make an order to go into the system we already have. All delivery orders and their supporting order slips for pizza, pasta, salads etc. need to be marked "Delivery" because they are packaged differently, kind of like "pick up" orders. The final assembly combines hot stuff and cold stuff. It would be easier if you could put it all together as each part was finished. Unfortunately, you are trying to keep the hot, hot and the cold, cold right up until it all goes to the delivery guy. We can help that with warmers and coolers with glass doors. How big and how many will be dependent upon volume. We have no idea what volume we will be dealing with until we are at it for a while. In the beginning we will fake it. We will make some mistakes and we will get better at it. The last piece of apparatus is the vehicle. Gene's truck and my truck need to be cleaned up and made ready for delivery. We need to think through paint jobs with name, logo, phone number etc. We need to think through insurance. What do we do if the driver uses his own vehicle? How do we compensate them for gas? Everything changes if we have two orders per night or forty.

As Ed was working through all this in his mind, he was glad that Gene wasn't involved yet. He has been great with everything, but this amount of unknown might cook his brain. He knew he had to iron out some kinks before Gene could process this without hurting himself. It's almost lunch. Ed was thankful Tuesdays were slow. As he checked in with all his guys he looked up at Donnie and said, "By the way, we are postponing painting for a while."

Donnie looked back and said, "Merry Christmas to you too." Both men knew their plates were beyond full. A two week wait on painting might allow for breathing.

Gene had come in to clean up before lunch, leaving Leslie out there playing with her flowers. Pretty much everything looked about normal except that there were more customers than expected. The place was filling up. Didn't they know this was Tuesday? Everybody that walked in were shocked at what they saw. Many hadn't been in to see last week's changes to the bar so everything was new. It was weird, people were just walking around looking at all that had been done. Eventually they all sat down and began to order.

The Bucket was staffed up to provide training for all the new people. Thank God. The place was damn near full. Ed took the door. Donnie and Elery took over pizza and recruited Tom to spread pies. Harry was keeping up on pasta. The dining room and lounge quickly formed into four stations with two bussers in support. One guy went to dishes and two more moved to the middle for drinks, salads, pie cutting and garlic bread. This was Tuesday lunch! It was no big thing. We all had been this busy before. But this was Friday night busy, not Tuesday lunch busy.

There was no advertising, no article, no flyers. The only thing was the new look to cars passing by. Everybody knew their jobs, and everything was flowing fine. There were two busy bartenders. We had never had two bartenders at lunch. Somewhere in the midst of a stream of "congratulations" and "looks great" a thought crept

over the minds of many, "What in the hell are we going to do tomorrow night? Or the rest of the week?"

As the last of the well-wishers went back to their work the staff gathered in the bar for a meeting that wasn't called. Gene started it off with, "What the hell was that?"

Donnie said, "This shit happened because they saw an awning. Can you imagine if this article is any good?"

Ed said as he began handing out copies of two sheets of paper, "As lunch was ending I got a fax of tomorrow's article. Read it." Silence took over the room as Ed walked behind the bar and poured himself a beer. There were about a dozen people reading. Through the silence you would hear a chuckle or laugh or holy shit or oh my God. Finally, Gene said, "If this article could be made better, I don't know how. Folks, I think we are going to be a little busy"

Karen said, "You think?"

Ed broke in, "OK," he paused and specifically looked at Gene as he said, "I don't want anybody freaking out here. This is all good news. A couple things, I think we are going to postpone the flyer thing for a while. We need to focus on eating what we've got before we go making any more. Really this is great."

Leslie walked into a room full of people with weird faces on. Gene handed her an article that she began to read. About halfway through she busted in with, "Wow this is great. Get your running shoes on folks. The Bucket is coming out of hiding." She emphasized her statement with a "High fives all around."

Somehow that broke the ice as everyone began to cheer. Lot's of "here we go, this is cool, I can't wait...etc." Gene still looked like his landing gear lights just went out.

Ed tried to bring everybody back together. "Listen, things always look harder until you break them down. We knew we were going to be busy. We have a max staffing list that will go into effect now and stay that way for a while. We know how to handle a full house. If the waiting list gets to be too long folks will leave and come back another time. All we have to do is take care of our customers. The article mentions the delivery business but doesn't really sell it like the flyer would have. By skipping the flyer we will have a couple delivery orders but nothing earth shaking. This will give us a little time to slide into that one. We need to rethink all inventory levels, again. We need training starting right now. Everybody needs to know how to work the computer, make all salads, prepare garlic bread, cut pizzas, and set up drinks. Everybody needs to know all the coffee drinks. Harry, I need three people other than the usins to assist on pasta. Donnie, I need two who can make dough, four who can spread shells and make pies. Gene, I met your new bar person and I like her. We need one more or at least a bar back. We need two more who can close out a dining room ticket and make change. When you look at all of that together it seems like a lot. Is there any one thing there that we can't do?" Pause. "See once you break it down it's not so bad. We can do this. Enjoy it folks, bring me your problems"

Everybody moved on to their duties. Gene looked at Ed and said, "How much of that do you believe?"

"Most of it. I've got some problem areas I've got to work on. The pickup procedure sucks. I've got to fix that. We are way short on storage, and the salad prep is still a little cumbersome."

Gene smiled and said, "I think you are going to like my surprise. This afternoon I've got a freezer, big fridge and a trailer being delivered. I also have that salad prep table coming in. Paul's already got them wired. See, I'm more than just a pretty face around here."

Ed was chuckling. What was really cool was the smile on Gene's face. He sometimes thinks he isn't contributing enough around here. He's the only one that thinks so but a move like this makes him feel great. "Well done partner. I guess the part that scares me is the unknown. We could run out of napkins or open a bad case of lettuce, whatever."

Gene said, "Well we've planned for everything the best we can. We know where to get more of just about everything at a moment's notice, and here's the big one, Our customers will see that we are busy beyond belief. They will be impressed at how we are handling things. If we need a mulligan in there someplace, they will forgive."

Ed looked at Gene and said, "Look who is encouraging who. I know Have faith." Gene poured short beers, they clinked glasses and went on to their tasks. For Ed it was streamlining the pickup process.

Trucks started showing up. Phone trucks, delivery trucks, Beer trucks, big trucks with all the new stuff. Gene was pointing for placement of freezers, trailers and fridge and salad table. He was signing invoices for beer liquor and supplies. Harry was checking his orders that had arrived. He began negotiating with Gene on use of the trailer. He almost flipped when he found out it was for him. He began thinking a storage plan for fridge, freezer and dry goods. He called over Donnie for a consult. Somewhere in there they looked at each other as Harry said, "This is the real deal."

Leslie had quietly returned to her planting project that had occupied the last five hours of her day. It looked it. Ed glanced over and thought "God, her work is as beautiful as she is." The colors were right, the height of the plants flowed well. It just looked great. Paul had just showed up and motioned to Leslie that he would be right over after he checked on the trailers.

The big trailer carried a tow motor with it. The backup beep beep sound let everyone know to keep an eye out. With a nudge or two here and there all three units were in place and hooked up. Paul went back to Leslie.

Yesterday this was a pile of dirt. Now it looked like a professionally designed landscape expression. When Paul walked up he said, "Make sure these yokels of yours remember to water this."

She laughed. "Ohh, they'll remember. You like it?"

"Can I use you on other jobs?"

"Absolutely"

Leslie said. "I put the light fixtures on those braces you left me. I buried them but haven't covered them over until we check out their coverage."

Paul said, "They're good. You can still maneuver about ten degrees all directions. Have your man fill them in. They will cover the front great. I'm wondering if we are going to get enough light from this one unit to light up the garden itself. I left enough line that once these plants grow a little if you want another fixture or two it will be no big deal to hook it up."

Leslie responded, "Good, I think this will work for now, next year we will see."

Paul had gone back to the first two fixtures now that Neal had filled them in. He adjusted the heads of both with a screwdriver. You could kind of see the light pattern on the awning and building. He said, "This should be good but check it out once it gets dark. It's an easy adjust." The three of them stepped back into the parking lot to get a better look. After a bit of a pause Neal was the first to say, "She looks great".

Paul smiled, "Sure does."

"Leslie said, "OK Neal, make one last clean up. Get all the packing into the dumpsters and give it the final sweep."

Paul said goodbye and drove off. Neal swept and Leslie went to find Gene.

Once inside she found him. "Gene, What about dumpsters? What you've got is almost full."

Gene thought, this is the kind of stuff that Ed was talking about. Yesterday we filled the dumpsters with all the work going on. They were switched out today. All the delivery stuff and the landscaping wrappings damn near filled them again. We'll need another pick up tomorrow morning. "I'm on it" Gene said.

Ed saw Harry and Donnie playing in the trailer. "OK boys we can play in the trailer later. If today's lunch told us anything, I bet we are going to busier tonight than expected."

Donnie, "I'm ready"

Harry said, "Bring 'em on."

Ed loved the bravado, false or otherwise.

Leslie said goodbye to Ed and went home to clean up. She had a busy day at her office tomorrow catching up after two days off. She wanted to work the door with Ed on Thursday through the weekend. It sounded like fun to both of them.

Yes, the night was busy. Yes, everybody liked the new look. Yes, the team, old and new worked well together. And the big one, Yes, the food turned out as good as ever.

The next morning arrived without any fan fair. Ed and Gene were the first to reach the bucket. A fresh pot of coffee was fired up while both sat down to take a look at the morning paper. Usually, only Gene brings in a copy of the paper but today they both had a copy. As gene was opening his he asked, "Anything interesting?"

Ed said, "They're already advertising Halloween stuff"

"Really?"

They both started ripping through the pages to find it. Ed Said, "Oh my God"

"It takes the whole damn page. Wait, and on to the next."

Ed almost screamed, "There are three different pictures. Yesterday the copy looked huge. Add the pictures, It's like we won the war."

The phone started ringing. Kids who never bought a paper in their life were waiting at the store for the truck to pull up. All the employees called in some time that morning. The phones just kept on ringing. Lots of customers, lots of friends and relatives called. Most could tell that other phones were ringing so they got off quick after a congratulations. Some calls were pretty special.

"Hey Eddy"

Only one guy called him Eddy. "Hi Henry"

"You look pretty special today kid. Did you serve the president or something?"

"One would think"

Henry kept going with "I am so proud of you. You and Gene have worked so hard and so smart to make all this happen. You deserve this, Ed. Do you know how much crap I'm going to have to listen at my place today?"

"We all get our day in the sun. You have worked for and had many. Looks like I get some sunshine today." Ed said.

"When things settle down a little bit let's take mom out." Henry paused and then added, "We better just do it. I don't think things are going to settle down for you soon. Go back to work and show them that you're as good as they print."

"Thanks Henry. For everything, I mean it. Thanks."

A flower truck pulled up. The driver got out holding two different bouquets. Gene looked at Ed with a smile. He was reading the cards as the driver went back to the truck for two more. Three of the four included a copy of the article along with the flowers. They were all from regular customers. Gene motioned to place one at the front desk and the others at the bar.

Dorothy came up and said, "First I'm glad you liked the menus. I've learned other stuff at school that I thought could be helpful here."

"Such as?"

"These big TVs of ours are actually computer screens. I can put anything you want up there and have it move, slide back and forth whatever. You could run bar specials, upcoming food specials, anything you want whenever you want it. I can incorporate graphics, video, stills etc. At some point in time people will want to book the bar as a conference or meeting location. Just about everyone is using "PowerPoint" as presentation software. It's part of your office program software. Anyway, you should have this capability and use it to self-promote."

Ed said, "Well Dorothy, you've done it again. Yeah, we have "PowerPoint". Put together a couple slides and let's see how they work."

Dorothy quickly added, "OK you'll have some to look at tomorrow"

As the meeting was breaking up Ed asked Donnie to stay behind. "Donnie, when this whole remodeling thing came along we were more interested in saving money than time. That's why I was going to paint. All of a sudden, I'm too important to deal with simple things like work so you got the job. Well guess what? You're too important to deal with painting also. Gene is afraid of wasting your time on the job, so he wants Paul's guys to take over the painting. I want you to know that this is a compliment not a slam. We have no doubts that you can do it, we just want your time and energy devoted to the inside."

Donnie said, "Well thanks, I guess. It doesn't look like I'm going to have a hard time getting hours. So yeah, I'm cool with it. Thanks for taking the time to tell me."

"Are you ready for tonight? I think it will be our busiest night yet. Tomorrow and the next day will even be bigger."

Donnie said, "I'm ready and my guys are ready. I even gave them an "Ed pep talk.""

Ed said, "The only unknown for tonight is the delivery business. It was mentioned in the article but not as a big thing. The flyer program is how we are going to get that business. If a couple orders come in tonight, we're going to fake it the best we can. OK let's fire up lunch and see how many people read the paper."

As expected, it was nighttime busy not daytime busy. Because we were staffed and prepped we flew through lunch like it was no big thing. Right at the start of lunch the phone rang. Gene got it at the bar and yelled for Ed to take the call. It was a delivery order.

Ed went to the computer and phone and answered. "We hear you guys now deliver, is that right?"

Ed came back with, "It sure is and you are the first delivery customer. And no, that doesn't mean you get it for free. Let's start with your phone number." He processed through address complete with closest cross street. He then went on to the order of two pizzas and a large Caesar salad. When he clicked off the order he ran to the pizza and salad station to make sure the slips printed correctly with the word DELIVERY across the front.

The good news was that the location was only about 6 blocks away, the bad news is that he didn't have a driver. He told Gene and Karen what was going on and that they might have to cover the door while he was gone. In the next nine minutes Ed seated another six parties. He split to the back, put the waiting pizzas in the delivery pouch and grabbed the paper bag with the salad. He noticed that everything was marked with order number. He picked up the ticket and the food and went out the door. It only took five minutes either way. Ed was happy he remembered to bring change with him. He made sure he dropped off a couple menus with the order got back in his truck and headed back to the Bucket. The whole thing took nine minutes. The first thing he knew he had to do was to teach other folks how to take an order.

As soon as he got back he could tell that lunch was raging. There really weren't any hold ups but everybody was busy. During all of this everybody wanted to talk about how great the article was. At 12:40 it got a little crazy. Many of the first wave of customers had finished and wanted to pay their checks. The busboys were cleaning tables as quickly as they could. The action was still steady coming out of the kitchen. There were four people wanting to pay their table's bill with three tables wanting seats. Ed was trying to stay cool. "He looked at the new people and said your tables are being cleaned up right now. Give me a couple minutes and we will get you seated. OK, you guys wanting to pay. Does anybody not need change?"

Two responded saying the rest was for their server. Ed took those checks, said thank you and gave them a menu. Ed signaled Karen over and said "I've got a three and a five waiting."

Karen looked at the guests and said, "let me seat the table of five, and come right back for the group of three."

Ed went to the bar holding the other checks, cashed them out and returned with change and receipts. It worked. It wasn't great but it worked.

For the next forty minutes there were people coming and going. Because there were more going the restaurant was slowly emptying out. By the time 1:30 hit there were 4 tables in the dining room all finishing up their meals, 5 tables like that in the lounge and a bar that was more than half full. At 2:00 Ed gave a gesture that everyone knew meant that we were going to have a meeting. By that time there was only one table in the dining room so that is where everybody took seats.

Ed started with "What did we learn today?"

Karen said, "We can do this. Yeah, it was busy but if we've got people in all the right spots it works out."

Dorothy added, "Checking out got a little slow a couple times. The rest worked out pretty good. All the customers were talking about the article. A couple tables said that we lived up to what the paper said. I felt good about that."

Ed answered, "Yeah I heard a whole bunch of that. You know it works because we have a finite number of tables and chairs. When they are full, they are full. As long as we're paying attention and getting them their food, we are doing all we can do. We just need to have enough staff on hand to pull it off. I had two problems I'm working on. First like you said check out needs to be quicker. Tonight, and through the weekend I've got Leslie helping me at the door. I'll set up a register for her out there, that should cure that problem. The second problem I was totally unprepared for, delivery. With a little luck we will be fully suited up for delivery by next weekend. We postponed the flyer campaign, but it was mentioned in the article. Well, that "mention" spurred our first order. I'm guessing we are going to have 5 or 6 tonight. So, unless somebody knows somebody willing to work from 5:30 until 9:00 with a license then I'm going to have to go over our recent applicants to grab someone. If this goes the way I think it is going to go I will need 4 or 5 folks like this."

Neal raised his hand, once recognized he said. "My roommate could do that. He's got a heavy class schedule so he can only work 10 to 15 hours a week. Something like this could be great. He's smart and sociable. He'd be good at it."

"Call him to come in and talk to me this afternoon"

Neal nodded.

Ed began again, "Ok we all know how to make an order on the computer. A delivery order is a little different. When they call in it will typically be either a pickup order, delivery order or a woman looking for Donnie."

Everyone laughed. The lesson continued through phone number, address, cross street, order, notes, etc. Because everyone was familiar with computer ordering adding the necessary items for delivery was no big thing. Ed told them where the new phones were going to be set up and that for tonight, we would be taking orders at the front, the bar and Ed's desk.

Time to get ready for tonight. The evidence of yesterday's crowd brought in only by a change of look to the front, followed by a super lunch fueled by the article suggested that it was going to be balls to the wall busy tonight.

Ed had interviewed Norm, Neal's roommate and found him to be what Neal said. He filled out paperwork and was told to return at 4:00 for training. He was made familiar with the dress code. When he got there Karen took him through the computer ordering process. She pointed out the difference between dining room orders and pickup/delivery. After all of that Ed got him his final instructions.

"We don't know how many delivery orders there will be tonight. He showed him the article. Norm interrupted with "I read it. Neal was so excited he made me read it."

"Yeah, well we have a whole marketing program to drive delivery sales that we put on hold because the Trib article is creating some serious business for us. Although we haven't really marketed the idea it was mentioned and has already mustered some orders. We need to have you in case. Believe me there is enough stuff for you to do around here if the phone never rung. I will have Donnie show you pizza cutting and boxing, drink filling, garlic bread making and anything else that pops up along the way. Always be looking for something to do. Your first

duty is to that phone. Once you have an order you need to fill it with the components and deliver it to our customer. Before you leave double check your slip to make sure you have it all. It's the walk of shame to come all the way back because you forgot a pasta or salad. Make sure you have it all before you leave. The work relationship here is based on mutual respect. Be nice to your co-workers, be nice to our customers and double check your slips before you leave. Once we get this bad boy cooking you will typically leave with two or three orders at a time. Use the thermals to keep our food warm for the trip. We need to make every order good, so they want to order again. Do you get it?"

"Yeah, I think so."

Ed concluded, "OK go home, clean up, change and come back."

Ed moved on to making a bank for Leslie up front. Leslie showed up looking like she was going to a fancy dinner party.

"God, you look great" as he kissed her.

"Thank you, this is a big night. Were you busy today?"

Ed said, "No, just a normal Friday night kind of crowd."

"Really?"

Ed said slowly, "Yeah, It is going to be some serious rock and roll for the next 4 hours. Everybody is prepared and ready. Gene might have a heart attack but other than that I think everybody is game ready. By the way you have a couple extra duties that kind of surfaced as we went through today. First, you have a cash drawer for cashing out dining room orders. We needed a second station. Second you are one of the phone persons. Although we put off the flyer marketing, the fact that we deliver was mentioned in the article. They are starting to call. I hired a delivery guy who answers the phone if he isn't on the road or on a different line. After two rings pick it up. Leslie already knew how to make a dining room order she just needed the pick up/delivery process. She got it quickly.

Here they come. It was almost getting annoying, the number of good things the customers were saying about the article. Almost. Filling up the dining room was easy. About halfway through that process we started asking if they wanted to sit in the dining room or the lounge. Soon there were no choices other than wait for the specific table you want while you watch others get seated before you.

From the computer at the host station Ed could track if any Delivery orders came in. Ed left Leslie at the desk while he checked on Norm. There were four delivery orders in the pipeline. Ed assigned the first three to Norm and assigned the last to himself. It was also the closest allowing for a quick return. Ed went back to the front to check on Leslie. She was a pro at this. He mentioned that he would be gone for about 10 minutes once his order came up. No problem.

Ed went back to the kitchen as Norm was loading up. He was double checking to make sure he had it all.

While he was waiting for his order to surface three more delivery orders came in. Ed's order popped and off he went. Found the house, no outside light of course, rang the bell and delivered. They gave him a \$2 tip. Go figure.

He pulled in the bucket and saw the parking lot was packed. People were waiting outside for a table. He walked in and could feel the stress. There were no major problems. The new salad table worked great. All the product was there and at the right temperature. Ed walked out to the dining room and saw that a bunch of tables had left

simultaneously. It's funny but that happens a lot. People see people leaving and decide to do likewise. Ed joined in with the bussers and waitresses to clean and prepare the tables for the next seating. Bam! Four new tables were seated. Ed moved on to the lounge and found the same to be true. By pitching in three more tables were made available. That just about took care of everybody that was waiting. He went back to the kitchen where Norm was loading up three more orders. There were 5 more in the pipe and one on the phone line. Ed looked at the timing assigned himself three more deliveries and continued answering the phone. It looked like Ed's estimate of 6 was going to be off by a couple dozen.

Ed poked his head in on Harry and then Donnie to see if they were still breathing. All good. They actually looked happy. Ruth the major salad girl was keeping up ok. Bussers and servers were keeping up on cutting pies. Garlic bread got behind a couple times. Not a biggie.

It got to be 9:30 and somebody shut the world off. All new action stopped. Now was when you needed to keep everybody in the game for another 20 minutes or so. Everyone was tired. Everyone felt good about how the evening went but everyone wanted to take a break at the same time. Ed went around and gave his rolling pep talk encouraging everyone to stay focused for another 20 minutes. Stay with it just a little longer. A little more clean up, another sweep through their tables clearing old dishes. Just a little more. Everyone complied and felt better for it.

Norm was able to keep up with the balance of his deliveries. He closed out his night with 13 orders. Ed had taken a total of 5.

Ed went over to Leslie and asked, "How did you like it?"

"It was fun, a bit crazy at times but fun. Your customers are really impressed with what you guys have done here. They're coming back, they're bringing their friends, they are going to try the delivery thing. I didn't see an unhappy customer all night. It was really quite impressive. It was kind of like they wrote in the newspaper article. How about you? How well did your crew in the back hold up?"

"Everybody was great. Yeah, busy as hell but they loved it. I've got this new guy Norm. He hadn't been in the building before 3:30 today. He learned it all in an hour. He made 13 deliveries and I made 5. Can you imagine if we'd have delivered those 1,000 flyers? We'd still be cutting pies."

Ed went back to work. He told all the leaders to feed their people and start punching them out. For the last 90 minutes of the evening we needed two kitchen people, two dining room people and one bar person. The secret that management often had a hard time learning was that it's ok to let your people get the hours at the end of the night. Ed and Gene didn't have to prove anything to their employees. It's ok to have others clean the counters and mop the floors.

Ed, Gene and Leslie met at the bar for a drink. Gene asked Leslie, "Well?"

She answered, "I see how you guys get addicted to this stuff. It really is exciting."

Gene answered, "Yeah, it's fun because it's working. If you were busting your tail like this and not winning, it would get old real fast."

Ed chimed in with "Winning is good."

Gene said, "How profound."

"You taught me. Did you get a number for tonight?"

Gene said, "Yeah another record. It's a Wednesday for God's sake. I'm trying to imagine the balance of the week. What do you need to do different?"

Ed answered, "I need at least one more delivery guy, maybe two. If we pop that flyer next week, I'll need four at least. I'm actually feeling pretty good about how it all turned out."

Leslie commented, "Well, you ought to. Maybe because you guys are in it all the time you don't notice, but do you realize how many customers you served tonight? And they all liked it. All I know is I want another story."

Gene looked over and said, "You've got bigger balls than I do girl." Gene noticed that Ed gave in to Leslie a lot easier than he did when Gene asked.

Ed said, "OK top off my beer and I'll give you the next installment."

Foster and Sarah really liked Harrison and Linda, but today was special and needed to be enjoyed with just the two of them. The first thing they did was complete the ride along the total border of their land. They were both fascinated with the size. Foster had brought along a shovel and some stakes in case he wanted to mark something. Every once in a while, he would get down and turn over a couple shovel loads of dirt. It all looked pretty good.

Most of the hard wood was back by the stream with one stand of trees 50 feet deep about a third of the way into the property. Most of the land was covered with various grasses. You could probably graze about 40 head as it was. With a little work you could double the output. You couldn't make a living off of that, but it could handle your own needs and then some.

Foster spotted some baron spots that he checked out further. One area that he marked had small rocks and sand. This was good because he was going to make lots of concrete and small rocks and sand are two of the four ingredients. When they turned back towards where they came in the Rock already dominated the horizon. No matter how you looked at the Rock, it was huge. When they got up close Foster was just shaking his head. Sarah said, "I like it"

Foster noticed that there was vegetation all around the Rock in fact there were some trees. Foster dug some test holes on all sides. It was all pretty easy digging. That eliminated one of his initial fears that the soil around the Rock wasn't going to be useable. Foster kept walking around the Rock studying the shape. He would silently move in close to the rock and then step back away. Finally, Sarah asked what he was doing.

Foster put a stake in the ground about 15 feet out from the rock. He then walked 7 or 8 paces and planted another stake. Foster took Sarah by the hand and walked between the stakes and faced the Rock. With hands outstretched he said, "This is going to be our home for the first summer."

The reality of the statement made Sarah's head spin a little but then she got it. The rock offered a great wind break and the southerly location offered the best light. Now Sarah's mind kicked in. She could see where the stove was going to be, bed, supplies, chairs, table etc. Foster moved on to his next mental placement while Sarah kept thinking her way through the home.

Sarah had pretty much finished her design so she ran over to catch up with Foster who was looking down the hill. Sarah then asked, "OK what do you see.?"

"Remember, we are going to be building forever. This first year it won't look like much but half way through next summer it will be pretty good. We'll have our temporary home up by the Rock. I'm going to dig out what will be our root cellar under the new house that will be 16 feet by 32 feet."

Sarah questioned, "That sounds like a lot of digging and how did you come up with numbers like 16 by 32?"

"Yes, it is a lot of digging. I might hire a guy or two for a couple days. The numbers are something times 8. Lots of lumber product come in eights. If I build 20 by 30 I'd have a bunch more cutting. This year I'll get the basement dug with concrete floor and foundation walls. I will also put in the foundation posts for an attached 32 feet by 32 feet barn. Later on I'll convert the barn into more house and build another barn. Remember I'm good at building. I can do all the inside finish work in the winter. I can dream up lots of things to build but you just got to go at it a day at a time."

Sarah then asked, "You've always got a plan. What's the plan?"

Foster responded, "Well, the first thing I've got to do is buy a wagon, mule, tools, stove, plow and some lumber with hardware. You're going to go over your lists to see what you need to buy. We'll sleep in the wagon the first couple days while we build the starter home. I can get it buttoned up in a couple days with a few more days needed to finish it off. I'll need to haul a couple barrels of water from the stream. Because we have water I won't have to dig the well until after I get your garden plowed. I have no idea how good I'm going to be at plowing. I also don't know if it is better to have less rows that are longer or more rows that are shorter. Harrison will know. I don't know how many rocks or stumps I'm going to run into. There is a lot about plowing I don't know. The only thing I do know is that I've got a lot to plow. Remember this is just for the garden. This has nothing to do with planting to support livestock. That's a next year problem. We don't have to feed any livestock over the winter this year but next year I'm going to need a barn full of hay and grasses.

Sarah asked, "Are you still sure about living back in the city for the winter?"

"Yeah, there is just too much work to get done. If we were going to stay, I'd need livestock. If we were going to have livestock, I'd need shelter and literally tons of feed. Plus, we've got the baby coming. We are going to be here for the rest of our lives. These first couple years are important to plan out, besides your cousin invited us to stay. I've got some things to learn from Brad. This is a better plan. Don't worry, you'll have enough work to do."

"What do we eat the first year."

Foster said, "We'll have to buy some food. I want to buy about 10 chickens and four or five small pigs. We'll eat eggs and eventually chicken as we get to the end of summer. We will have pork all summer. I want to end the year with no animals. It will take a month or two to get your garden growing. Remind me to get fencing for the pigs. The chickens can roam, they'll come for food. The pigs would wonder off if you don't have them fenced in."

The next day they took what was a three-hour ride to buy provisions. They were able to get just about everything they needed. Fitting it all on the new wagon was a bit of a task. They got back just as it was turning dark. Real dark. They put up Poli and the mule. They spread their bedding under the wagon and drifted off to sleep for the first night at their new home.

Ed was done. "Ok that's it for tonight. Remember there are over 100 years of stories. If I kept going at the same pace, we'd be building a chain of restaurants by the time I got done."

Gene was quick to add, "I'm not getting tired. How about you Les?"

"I could listen all night"

Ed said, "Maybe so but I'm going to start hitting the fast forward button. I think it was important to show how it all began. I want everyone to get the feel for how hard everything was back then. Going to the store was almost a whole day. You'll see that days were long and the work never ending. And then you would get up and do it all over again. It was so tough that over half of the homesteaders failed. My family was tough.

Anyway, I'm going to sweep through entire decades with a four-inch brush. Some stories need to be told. I'll try to fill in enough information, so you know it's all part of the same story. For instance, the hut got built the well got dug, the field got plowed, the garden got planted, the chickens and pigs grew and got eaten. A nice surprise was Foster shooting two deer over that first summer. They hired two men for all the digging and concrete work. It took two wagon loads of lumber to cover the cellar.

This young Mexican girl walked up on Sarah as she was planning the planting of her garden. She said "Mrs., My name is Alma and I live with my family down the road. We have enough land and cousins to work it but we need more cash coming into the home. I can do a lot of the things that you are doing now."

Sarah looked at the young woman and noticed how well she spoke English and presented herself. Sarah said, "Like what?"

"If I know what you are planting, I know how to lay it out. I know how to select the good seeds. I know how far to space them. Some vegetables need to be trimmed before they go in to boil, while others you wait until they come out of the water. I'm really good at all this garden stuff you're doing but I can do a lot more."

Sarah was listening, knowing to have someone that has done it before would be a big help. She asked, "like what else."

"I can cook, clean, split wood, just about all the things you need. Two of us can get more than twice the work done. The good news/ bad news is that women only make just more than half of what the men make. And I can outwork any of 'em.

"It sounds like you would be missed at your home."

Alma was quick to respond, "I've got an older brother and two younger sisters. They know how to sit back and let me do most of the work because they know I will. They have time to pitch in and get the family work done while I'm out earning a wage. I've also got an aunt and uncle and three cousins that could be doing more to help at home"

Sarah said, "Alma, I serve breakfast at 6:30 we go to work right after that. OK?"

"I look forward to both."

It never occurred to Sarah to check with Foster before she hired Alma.

The garden was a huge job. The plowing was easier than Foster had imagined. Planting was tough. Harvesting was tough but canning everything was insane. They planted seven different vegetables. They kind of came in at slightly different times but when the beans came in, they all came in. Starting the end of July through August Sarah's stove was going all the time. Once Foster met Alma and saw how she worked he understood why Sarah hired her. When it was all done Sarah had over 150 jars of food.

Along the way they learned a lot too. The next year Sarah knew to plant more of some things and less of others. The process for cleaning, cutting, peeling, boiling and filling got easier the more you did it. Sarah figured with just a little more land she could double her output.

Foster, Sarah, Harrison and Linda started a tradition. Every Saturday one family would go to the other for the day. This gave crucial social time because it was lonely on the farm. This way once a week they had someone else to talk to. It also gave Harrison and Foster a second set of hands to handle bigger projects that always came up. They learned from each other. For instance, Foster showed Harrison that you get your water supply from higher ground than your home and you let out your sewage to lower ground. It sounds simple but lots of folks fouled their own water supply by leaching sewage into it. Moving water is always easier if you have gravity working on your side.

Harrison and Linda were going to stay the first winter. They were hoping for a mild winter so they could graze the animals through most of it. They built their home from sod. It wasn't pretty but it was free, and it worked. They also built a simple shelter for the animals. Foster offered to help on this building if in return he could leave Poli and the mule for the winter while they were away. Agreed.

Foster could tell that Harrison had money. Even so he decided to start his building using little of it. Lots of folks went with sod homes. Usually, it was because it was all they could afford. Foster thought that Harrison was being more than frugal. He wanted to know that prairie life was for him before he sunk a lot of money in development.

One Saturday while working with Harrison they saw their neighbor to the North. Foster suggested that they invite them to the Saturday gatherings. Harrison was emphatically against it. "They are sheep people. I don't want nothin' to do with sheep people. They're gonna kill the land." Foster could see that Harrison wasn't going to budge.

By the time October came Foster was finished with his planned projects. Harrison needed some help. Foster and Sarah moved in with Harrison and Della for three weeks so Foster could help Harrison finish up. Sarah brought over 60 jars of canned vegetables and sauces to help them through the winter. Together they made a big list of provisions they would need. They took both wagons and loaded up.

By the time November hit Sarah was big with child. Harrison took them to the train station that was almost a day's ride. After goodbyes Sarah and Foster boarded the train for the long trip to St. Louis.

The most important lesson that Foster got was in St. Louis with Brad. It took a day or so for everyone to get settled in. Each night when Brad got home, they would tell prairie stories. The details of the stories always got through. What you couldn't really pass along was the serenity and the loneliness.

About a week into their stay Brad started asking questions that were leading somewhere. Foster didn't quite know where, but he knew something was coming. Finally, Brad asked "what separates you from the rest of the settlers?"

Foster answered, "I guess my background. I know a lot of practical things and I work hard. I think that advantage is going to fade once everyone gets through the building stage of their claims. People will see that I know what I'm doing and ask for my help. How much of that I'm going to have time for while trying to cultivate the land to support the livestock I'm going to need. I haven't really figured that out yet."

Brad asked, "What other skills do you have that others could use?"

"I know how to fix things. I'm mechanical. I know how to butcher. I can work a forge. I think that one is going to be important. When you bust a plow sheer everything stops until you get it fixed. Right now that could be a week with a trip to town."

Brad continued, "You've still got a little money left don't you?"

"Yeah, we are better off than I thought we would be. Why?"

Brad poured them both a drink and said, "I've got an idea for you to consider. You have skills that others don't have, and others are probably better farmers or ranchers than you. Meanwhile, Sarah knows how to run a business right?"

Foster said, "Yeah, she did most of the buying and all of the book work for her aunt's store. What are you thinking about?"

"OK, why don't you open the general store? Before you say no think about what you could do. Not only do you have a store, you have a butcher shop, forge, construction business and you supply all the latest tools and farm equipment. You display what you sell. Let me give you an example. Are you going to hook up a windmill to you well?"

"Yeah, maybe this year."

How about if I sold you at cost the best windmill and storage system for water that would gravity feed your home? If you had that could you sell it to others. And install it."

Foster smiled and said, "That would be easy."

Brad continued, "We have a new silo system that is five feet across and four feet high."

"That's not much of a silo."

"They stack. Two men can lift each section and build them as high as you want."

Foster started to see what was coming. "Yes, I could sell those too."

Brad said, "I need to take you to my work. We have so many new tools and devices that could make life easier on the prairie. We need somebody selling it. That is just the beginning. Have you seen what they are doing with generators and internal combustion engines? It's just starting. The farm implications are huge. If we could get you set up with the basic stuff now it would only be natural for you to pick up the new product lines as they came along."

"Jeepers. In the beginning I'd just have a hundred or so customers, but that number would increase especially after three years when people are allowed to sell off portions of their land."

Brad continued, "You need to get other selling relationships as well. You need to hook up with a saw mill to represent lumber to your customers. You need to be a stop-over for the stage coach, a line for the telegraph, a place for provisions for the wagon train, and a station for the train that will be coming right next to your spread. Hell, you can offer fresh horses for the stage, hot meals for passengers and water for the steam engines."

Foster's eyes were opened as far as they could go, half from fear and half from excitement. Finally, he said, "Look I said I have enough money to do what I thought I was going to do. You're turning me into something else. I need a windmill and a silo I planned for that. All the rest of this stuff is way out of my budget. It sounds great but I don't think I can do all the stuff you're talking about."

Brad looked up with a smile and said, "If I got you that and more for free to be a rep of our product then you would be way ahead. The commissions on sales are big. You can pay off the stuff we give you and still make money off the sale. You were going to finish your house and barn anyway, just make it a little bigger. I know people that can get us a meeting with the stage line, wagon train promoters, telegraph station. The more things we get at your site the better it is for everyone."

Foster said, "I'm a brave man or I wouldn't have started this settler thing in the first place. You are asking for a real big step here. I need to talk to Sarah to see what she thinks."

"Certainly, she is a big part of this. Cynthia and I are tired of St. Louis. It's too crowded and noisy. My company wants me to run the shop they just opened in Kansas City. Keep an eye open for sites that might pop up. We might choose to be your neighbor in a year or two."

And so the plan changed. Sarah loved the idea. She liked having more people around. She really liked that her cousin might move out with them. She knew that Foster had more talent than just pushing a plow.

Ed concluded, "Ok, you hustled another story out of me. Enough."

Leslie was quick to jump in, "Wait a minute. What about the baby?"

Ed shrugged, "OK, alright. In there, my great grandfather Foster was born. There."

Leslie pushed back, "What is it with men? Babies are cute, loving and later grow up."

Ed again, "They just lay there, cry and pee."

Leslie just looked on with hope that Ed's attitude will change if it's a little Eddie were talking about.

Gene then asked, "So Foster went entrepreneurial. That's smart. He took advantage of what he was good at. You come from good genes kid."

Ed went business again. "Donnie and Harry said their inventory levels are where they are supposed to be. The fridge, freezer and shed really helped. Good call. The only things I'm low on is pizza boxes. I'll pick some up in the morning. How's your bar stock?"

"I've got all the reps coming in the morning. We've got a pretty good system set up so I think we can stay on top of it. I think I need another bartender. I've got almost enough if no one gets a day off including me."

"Hire a person"

Gene answered, "Yeah, I know. How's your staffing?"

Ed said, "Well the first problem is drivers. Lots of people didn't read that article until after they got home and made plans for dinner. Tomorrow could be busier than today. I know the delivery thing is going to start kicking in, even without the marketing. It's going to be nutzo for a while. Leslie, when are you planning on working?"

Leslie said, "I'll be here after work tomorrow and Friday. You've got me for as much as you want on Saturday and Sunday."

Gene said, "God I could kiss you, but I'll leave that to my partner. In fact, why don't you guys get out of here."

Ed said, "OK we're gone. I'll see you in the morning."

CHAPTER 19 REFRIDGERATION, ICE, INSULATION, INSIDE PLUMBING - BUSY AS HELL

Thursday everyone was in on time. You could tell that people were starting to get weary but still excited about what was going on. Paul's painters showed up and began the painting process. Ed had scheduled interviews with potential drivers. There were over 40 applications on his desk. With a quick review he was able to eliminate 16. He always wondered how people could be so stupid when filling out applications for work. Some people couldn't spell even the simplest of words. Others missed entire questions. On the other hand some had resumes attached. They were kid resumes with little experience, but it showed gumption to have one. He started making calls. He scheduled a couple morning interviews. He got voice mail on many and left a message for an open interview for 2:00 this afternoon.

During morning coffee with Gene, he suggested something to keep morale up. "Gene, lets give away some bonuses. Certainly, for everyone who helped for free on the makeover but even some of the others that have been working hard."

Gene answered. "Are you afraid they are slowing down?"

"No but some of these guys have been putting in more than 100%. I think it could help our cause. We knew we would have to reward our volunteers anyway, why not make it now."

Gene said, "I agree. Do you want to go cash or check, and do you want it private or public?"

Ed responded, "I know it is smarter for us if we go with a check, but I have always found it to be more meaningful to get a wad of cash. I think we should do it at a general meeting. My brother always said to praise in public and criticize in private. We're going to have just about everybody on hand about 4:00. Let's have a short meeting and give out the dough. How much do you think?"

Gene paused for a moment and then said, "I think we need to give our stars who worked with us through it all \$300 at least. Maybe a fifty-dollar bill for some other guys. I don't think we need to bonus the guys we just hired."

Ed said, "Sounds good. Can we make this a blue task? Have a couple extras fifties and some cards in case we see someone that we forgot. My guess is that there are going to be about 17 all together with 10 of them being the bigger number."

Gene added, "I'm going to get thank you cards that you and I should sign, even leave a quick note for some of the special guys. I think that makes it that much more special."

"That's a great idea. What else have you got going today? I'm interviewing drivers."

Gene said, "I'm meeting with all my suppliers. This week is the last pre-season game and the first game for college. The article said we were doing up something for the weekend so I guess we should figure out what that is. Catch you later."

Between interviews Ed set up the table, shelf, computers and phones for the delivery area. He already had the big map on the wall. This time for the interviews he had to inspect driver's license and insurance cards on the applicants. He had his top two selected with many more to interview.

Lunch was brisk but not a barn burner. Everyone pretty well got the new norm in their head. The old days are gone. It was now assumed to be busy all the time.

Dorothy asked Ed, "Have you got a little time?"

"Sure"

She presented him with two pages for his review. Ed looked them over in silence. He called for Donnie and Gene to come over. Dorothy had other copies. Everyone read it over silently. Ed could tell that Dorothy was a little anxious about the reaction. Gene was the first to comment. "This is great Dorothy"

Dorothy began to relax a little and said, "I can still move stuff around if you like. I tried to design them as two stand alones. One on the article and the other on whatever we are pitching. This time that is delivery and weekend football. If you like the article one then we keep it and change the other for whatever special we are promoting. Remember the third piece is our menu all clipped together with our fridge magnet."

Donnie was next, "I like the two pictures you selected from the article and their placement. Your graphics for football are cool. I think the whole thing is great. When are we going to have the guts to run it?"

Ed finally spoke up. "To answer your question Donnie, next week. Dorothy this is great. Let's think about it. You get this on your doorstep. Hopefully you read at least some of it. You take the magnet and put it on the fridge. What's underneath it?"

Gene said, "The menu."

Ed answered, "Hopefully all of it but I would be thrilled if it was even just the menu. We could probably get the "special" page to be saved if we put a coupon on it."

Donnie said, "I don't think we need a coupon yet. We're all a little scarred that we can keep up with the action without a coupon. Why give away the store if we don't have to? Save the coupon for when we are trying to kick up the action later on."

Gene said, "I agree. We don't know what this is going to bring until we try it. I say let's go with it. All in favor?"

Everyone responded favorably. Dorothy could tell that Ed was about to say one of his thank you, great job speeches so she said before he could start. "One more thing, can you come to the bar?"

Everyone moved into the bar. Dorothy went over to the computer and pushed some buttons. All four TVs popped up a picture of a delicious pizza. People were starting to uh and ahh when the second picture popped up of a pasta and meatballs. A couple seconds later a picture of an antipasto and then one of an espressos being made. Everyone was pretty well freaked out when a picture of the rendering of the front of the Bucket appeared.

Gene said "Jesus."

Everyone applauded. Dorothy was overwhelmed with the response. Then she said "we can adjust the time, but I would suggest a one minute run that includes all the pictures. If you want to get sexy here's what you can do. If you've got people watching 2 of the TVs but not the others, then our promo could run on the unwatched as background advertising. By hitting control c on the computer by the register our promo would run for 60 seconds on all monitors."

Ed said, "We override our commercial when other commercials come on during the game. You've got to be kidding me."

Dorothy said "It would be nice if the computer recognized when the commercials came on, but it doesn't. Game commercials are typically three minutes or more. So, if the bartender notices that a commercial came on, he could hit control c and ours would come on instead. It goes back to the game or the rest of the regular commercials after one minute automatically."

Gene again, "You have got to be shitting me."

Ed said, "Girl you are my heart throb. Where did you get the pictures?"

"Yesterday afternoon my boyfriend who is a photographer came in and took the shots. Last night I did all the computer work on the program."

Donnie proclaimed, "When I saw you do your first pass at the menu, I knew you were good. This is over the top. Great job."

Gene said, "I don't want to be the bad news here but is it legal to push the other commercials out of the way like that?"

Silence. Then Ed spoke up, "I'd rather ask forgiveness than permission. I wouldn't even know who to ask permission from."

Gene spoke up, "Run it."

That concluded the excitement for the day. At 4:00 the crowd gathered. Ed opened, "Well as you can tell things are pretty exciting around here. We have come a long way and we've got further to go. Gene and I would like to call attention to some folks who have been giving it their all over the last couple weeks."

With that he called up each recipient and gave a little story about their contribution to the effort to change over the Bucket. Gene presented all the envelopes. Everyone was surprised.

After the meeting many came up to offer thanks and congratulations.

Ed was going through training the 2 new drivers as Leslie arrived. She hung with the staff for a while and then came to greet Ed with a kiss. "Bonuses huh? Quite nice. If you wanted these people to give blood now, they

would sign up. Are you set up for tonight?"

Ed answered with a smile, "Well, everything should be pretty much like last night except for the delivery thing. I'm predicting over 30 orders. We can make them ok and we have 2 new guys. I'm concerned about dispatching. If I had another person out here to work with you on the door, I would hang in the kitchen to do that. I think it will be alright with me dispatching from here at the front desk."

Leslie said, "It will work out OK. When we are caught up, you can go back to make sure it is all working. Tonight is just the warm up for tomorrow and Saturday when we're going to be busy."

Ed smiled, "Busy tomorrow. Hell, I feel better now. Tonight, is just a dress rehearsal."

Leslie smiled back and said, "You know what I mean. We'll get through this. How's Gene holding up?"

Ed said, "He's good, staying cool, at least on the outside."

Leslie asked, "How did the bonus thing work out. You totally surprised the troops. I think your timing was great."

Ed asked, "Did you see what Dorothy did? Here's the new marketing package going out next week. When you finish reading that go in the bar and see what we have on video."

Leslie read through the package as she was nodding her head. Finally, she said, "Dorothy did this? This is incredible."

Ed responded, "No this is ho hum when you see what she did in the bar. Go look."

Leslie went to the bar, talked with Gene for a bit, watched the video and then came back to Ed. "You have got to be kidding me. Gene showed me how you can run your commercial while the other commercials are running. I can't believe she did that."

"It took her two days. We can run any message we want whenever we want. I still can't believe it. Meanwhile she is thanking me for letting her complete her semester project using the Bucket."

Leslie laughed, "Maybe you should have charged her for it. OK here they come. Let's have a fun night."

And they did. The dining room was full to capacity most of the night. Same with the bar. Everybody was stoked with the video. Many customers were noting that neat new things were happening all the time. There were 35 delivery orders. All of that went pretty smooth except one house not being found. Thankfully that driver had a cell phone and could call the customer to be talked in. The streetlight was out and you couldn't see the street number.

There were a couple small screw ups in the kitchen. One was a spaghetti instead of an angel hair and a couple pizzas didn't have all the toppings they were supposed to. All problems were handled, and all customers made happy.

At about 9:15 a party of 2 arrived. It was Henry and a friend. Ed and Leslie spoke with them at the desk for a bit and then asked if they wanted to go to the bar for a drink before seating. They said yes. Henry wanted to see everything. Gene spotted them and came over immediately to greet them.

Dorothy addressed them quickly and asked for a drink order. She was clued in on this being Ed's brother. Henry was checking out everything as Ed came over. "How do you like it?"

Henry answered "This looks great. You really have a sports bar look." Then he noticed the TVs, he noticed what was running on the TVs. "OK, how did you do that?"

Ed said, "Your waitress Dorothy designed that after she created this." He handed Henry a marketing package. As Henry was reading through it Ed explained, "We were going to deliver 1,000 of these this week. We decided to wait a week to handle the bump we are getting from the Trib article. Before this went out, we had 35 delivery orders tonight. We have hopes that this package will help us along."

Henry finished reading the package and looked up at his little brother with nothing but pride in his eyes. "You have really hit the ball little brother. Your fix up is great and within budget. Your marketing is super. Your people know what they are doing and by all accounts your food is excellent. Well done."

Leslie had walked over just in time to hear Henry's compliments. She smiled inside and out. She knew how much Henry's opinion meant to Ed. There was a little more small talk. Henry spoke with Dorothy about her great work. Then they moved into the Dining room for dinner.

Leslie seated them and Karen was their server. They both ordered a pasta dish. Ed told Karen to make up a small pizza of small slices of different pizzas for him to sample with dinner. He then told Donnie what he wanted. Donnie knew immediately. The meal was served. The food was great and Karen was attentive. After the main course Ed took Henry on the tour of the kitchen. Henry has seen many kitchens. He was impressed with the layout especially noting the Delivery function.

Leslie, Gene and Ed joined them for an after-dinner drink. Henry was full of superlatives, his partner chimed along with great comments. Ed and Gene gave all credit to the staff and then Leslie piped up with, "You know I'm still a bit of an outsider here but I've got to tell you what these two guys have done impresses the hell out of me. They talk about their staff but they have created family here with people giving up their time and skill to be part of something special. It's amazing to watch."

Henry was the first to respond. "First, I can tell you are not an outsider here. Your touch is visible all over this place. And I agree what they have accomplished is more than making a successful restaurant. You don't get to see it often and when it's your brother and company that pulled it all together it is amazing."

Lots more thank yous went back and forth, they argued about the check and finally left. The three that were left looked at each other. Finally, it was Gene that said, "Well that was a pretty special end to a pretty special day. How do you feel partner?"

Ed paused and then said, "Well, I really don't know what to say. I think I need someone to pinch me to make sure I'm awake."

Leslie said, "I'd be happy to."

They all laughed. Gene said, "The numbers went up again. We're just about at capacity. I really don't know how many more we can serve."

Ed said, "There are two ways I can think of. First, this week end we are hoping to drive the day business up with football. In the evening I think all we can do is cut the serving time. I've been tracking the times."

Gene interrupted, "What tracking the times, how do you do that?"

"The computer tells me when the first order is turned in on every table and when they check out. When we are

slow by our new standards, I see the time it takes to service a table. When I go to when we are busy I can run the times there as well. When we are busy it takes on the average 9 more minutes to serve a table. So, if we got better at everything we should be able to turn the tables 9 minutes faster. Our busy serving times are still good and squeezing some chunk of those nine minutes would mean additional staffing and maybe even more equipment. For now, I think we should be happy with what we've got and just keep an eye on it."

Gene said shaking his head with a smile, "Yeah let's leave those nine minutes alone. I didn't even know that we could track that let alone that you were doing it. Let's just try to keep up with what we are doing."

Ed said, "Cool, let's give a check with our guys to make sure we are ready for tomorrow."

Ed and Gene made the rounds getting the high sign from everyone that they had what they needed for the next onslaught. Ed scheduled 5 drivers for Friday. He had been watching and noticed that the brightest bulb in the box was Steven. He took him through dispatching. Ed still wanted to do most of the dispatching but wanted someone who knew how in case he was under water. Steven was cool.

When the three gathered back at the bar Ed showed them how to check out a driver at the end of shift. Like many things, it is really simple the second time. Once you pull up the right screen of the computer you click on a driver. It tells you each order and total for the evening. You collect that amount plus the \$20 bank you gave him at the beginning of the shift. The totals all post to where they are supposed to go. Gene was especially interested because he always did the financial close out for the day. Sometimes he did it the night of but other times he bagged it all up in the safe and worked the forms in the morning.

Meanwhile everyone was cleaning up and checking out. Many stopped by to say a special thank you for the bonus.

Ed could tell that the troops wanted a story but were embarrassed to ask. So, he just plowed in.

"As you remember Foster and Sarah were going through a paradigm shift about their future as suggested by Brad. Actually, Brad did more than suggest he delivered. First Brad took Foster to his factory and showed him the tools and other items that they sold. Forest was immediately fascinated. He then looked at a catalogue of other products that they represented but did not have on site. As Brad had suggested Foster could use the silo and windmill system right away. He saw a wheelbarrow he wanted and a variety of tools. He knew he could use these things but better yet if he had them to look at, he knew he could sell them also. This was great.

Later on, in the week Brad set up a meeting with the local Postmaster and a person from the Wells Fargo stage lines. Both meetings were great. Because Foster was the first to ask from his area, he could be the new Post Office by merely filling out some forms. Then a strange thing happened. The Postmaster asked if there was a name for the Post Office. Foster drew a blank. The Postmaster asked if there anything that defines the area. Foster said, "Yeah, Big Rock". That simple notation in a non-descript postal form named the area. It started out as Big Rock Post Office and over the next 30 years grew into the City of Big Rock.

The first stagecoach meeting was kind of fact finding. Wells Fargo did have a line traveling up the Railroad right of way right next to Foster's property. They had to research how often a coach would make that run and whether they needed a rest stop in that approximate area. The rep said it would take a couple weeks to find out what they needed. They set up an appointment for the end of the month. When that meeting came around, they said there would be two weekly runs both East and West at that location. Making them a station was made easier by them already being a Post Office. He said they would have to learn how to be a telegraph station as well. Foster and Brad agreed.

Wells Fargo offered to provide one team of horses that Foster would maintain and change with the horses coming through 4 times a week. While they were changing the horses Foster and Sarah would feed the passengers and drivers. The fee for this had been worked out for lots of other stations along the line and was generous. Foster said he could be ready by the end of April. Some papers were drawn. Brad took them to a friend of his who was a lawyer. Three days later Foster was a Wells Fargo Station.

Meanwhile, Sarah kept getting bigger and finally gave birth to Foster Jr. Sarah and Cynthia were in heaven playing with the baby. Foster had never been around babies and was somewhere between being afraid and being annoyed. Sarah knew he would get better at being a dad as Jr grew.

Being a mother was such a special feeling. Sarah knew it was going to be difficult, especially with all the work of being a "prairie women." She knew she was a strong and healthy woman. She possessed enough love, courage and commitment to take on all the tasks of motherhood while keeping up with all her duties to the farm. It was a bit easier having Alma helping out on all of it.

Foster started working on his new plan. His first decision was to hire at least one guy maybe two. That number turned to 6 by the time July came around. What was going to be the attached 32 by 32 foot barn became a two story extension of the home. Sleeping quarters were created upstairs with the main floor becoming kitchen, dining area, general store, telegraph station, post office and saloon.

The first thing to be built was the choral for the horses. He would incorporate an area for the pigs and a tack room. All of that would be attached to the new barn that was going to be twice as big as what he envisioned last year.

Foster started to worry about money. It was the first time since the inheritance check came in that he thought he could get to the bottom of the bag. The good news is that both Wells Fargo and Post Office gave him money to set up the operation. It didn't cover it all but it sure helped. Brad's company supplying all their product was another big help. Foster started listing all the things in his old plan that he had budgeted. Then he added all the new items and their approximate cost. All of this was to determine if he had enough money to make it all happen. Then he tried to estimate what expenses he would have to figure out if he could make enough money each month to keep it all going. This is much more complicated than anything he had tried to figure out before. Sarah and then Brad were helpful.

Foster knew construction costs. In one day, he figured out all his material cost for the house, barn, corral and some other miscellaneous structures. He had two full pages broken down listing every item. Once he had completed the whole project he would go and get fresh prices for everything.

The next section to tackle was livestock. First you had to buy them, then you had to feed them with what is growing and then you had to feed them over the winter with what you have stored up. Foster knew he was pretty much over his head with all these estimates. It all tied together. The more work you did the more people you needed. The more people you had, the more food you needed. The more food you needed the more livestock you needed. The more livestock you had the more planting you needed. The more planting you needed the more people you needed.

The good news is that there were some fall back positions. If you had to buy grain you could. It was the same with other food items. Everything is cheaper if you grow it yourself. It's better to buy cheaper but the important part is being able get it somewhere.

What Foster and Sarah were doing was safer than what the rest of the settlers were doing. They were selling their

own product to themselves for the inn. If the General Store brought in customers, they could sell them inventory like any store but they could also sell them product they grew or created. Farmers growing a product have no control over what the price was going to be when they took it to market. Foster's mind was drifting. He had to get back working on his new plan.

Foster knew what a crew of four could do on house building. Barn building is not much different. He was going to need workers that either know or can learn farming, ranching and construction work. Somehow, he felt confident he could find them. He kept coming back to livestock because he knew he was shaky on his estimates of what he needed. He started writing down numbers as if he knew he was right.

He knew he needed a 6-horse team for the stage. He knew he was going to need an ox for the heavy lifting and plowing. He already had a mule and Poli. He figured on two milk cows. Maybe 10 pigs, 10 steer and a couple dozen chickens. He was thinking about sheep but figured this first year he would buy sheep from his neighbor he hadn't met yet.

The next part he started thinking about was the garden. He knew this was more a Sarah thing than his but for the sake of estimates he figured they would expand the growing area by about 50%. He kept thinking back to all the work he and Sarah put into the garden last year. This year life was going to be different. It wasn't going to be easier necessarily, but it would be different. Both he and Sarah would have people working for them. Let's start with the simple. Somebody was going to make three meals for 8 to 10 people every day. Then you have 2 cows to be milked and another 50 animals to be fed. Then you've got chickens also. None of the above has anything to do with the work of the farm. That's just making sure everybody is fed.

The prevailing wage at the time was \$10 a week plus room and board. The room and board part were more expensive than the wages. The rule of fairness was that the staff ate the same as ownership and pretty much enjoyed the same quality of living conditions. That starts out with everybody living on the ground. But as facilities were completed, they would be occupied by all.

Foster was starting to feel better about his plan. He thought he had considered most of the needs. Then he talked to Sarah. She pointed out some short comings, like furniture for instance. As their first section of the house was being completed, they would need somewhere to sit. Not only them but the patrons as well. They would need shelving and tables to display what they were selling. Lamps, plates, cups, glasses, bowls, pans, pots, knives, forks, spoons and various kitchen tools were quickly added to the list. Then she added beds, blankets and a bunch of baby stuff that Foster had no awareness of. This project was totally different than the simple existence of the two of them on the prairie. This was full-on business. They were certainly rural, so they didn't expect a crowd but when the stage showed up you needed food and supplies to offer. They would become the closest place for supplies for about 200 families. If they each made only two trips a month that would be more than 10 customers a day. They needed a safe.

Foster started to think about the General Store part of his operation. He thought back to what he was always looking for when he made his trips last year. There were certain food products you always had to have like flour, sugar, coffee and meal. Sarah would have a better list. Certain wood and hardware products were necessary. Some tools were good to stock. Foster was going to go to the store in town and look at what should be line items. He would also have to have relationships with suppliers of products that can be ordered. Sarah would make of a list of fabrics and sewing stuff they would need to stock.

The four would gather to talk almost every night after dinner. New ideas kept surfacing. Foster was still trying to understand how they made money for all these things that are happening. Brad broke it down for him.

"First you get a monthly payment from Wells Fargo and the Postmaster. The stage line offers transportation with meals. So, you get your regular payment plus \$1 for every meal served. Next, you buy product from distributors and sell it at the store and make the difference. Next you take orders for equipment like mine and make a 20% commission on all sales. Next you offer the service of building or installing. You can work out the numbers there but here I would charge \$3 per hour per man and pay \$1. Then you've got your restaurant and bar."

Foster looked at Sarah and asked, "Can we do all this stuff?"

"Yeah, I think so. We would know when the stages are coming. It wouldn't be fancy cooking, but I can always have a good stew or the like to offer. The retail is easy enough. The construction thing is all your doing."

Brad then said, "It is all going to move a lot slower than it sounds like now. You're going to be working your home projects like getting the corral ready or finishing the house. You will put in your own well water system. Others will see it and ask you about it. Same with the silo while you're putting up your barn. As people come by to mail letters just let them know what you are doing and what you will be offering in the future. You're not going to have everything in the beginning. It will grow over time."

Foster said, "I want to install a full water system from windmill and well to the house with toilets and leach field for the sewage. I think people will want that as soon as they can afford it. Do you guys make doors and windows?"

Brad answered, "No, but I know a guy who does. Good thinking."

Foster added, "The barn I'm building is going to have a workshop. Carpentry, plumbing, forge and butcher shop. I know how to get good use out of all that and I think I can train others too. This could get expensive. I can see how it will all work over time I just hope I've got enough money to get it all started."

The four of them kept pouring over their estimates. It looks like they can make it with enough to spare to hire people for the work. The two payments coming in every month really helped.

Foster kept making his trips to merchants and manufacturers to see who had the best products and the best prices. The stove guy offered terms. His trip to the closest thing to a General Store was enlightening. He quickly made friends with Bill and told him what he was doing. He asked, "I'm starting out small what do I really need to stock?"

Bill answered, "Well, if you are out in the boonies your customers are going to want manufactured goods like pots, pans and other metal things they can't get. You know the basic food items you have to stock but they are going to want spices, whiskey and some fun things like candy for the kids. They will always ask for things you don't have. Later on when you get it they don't buy it. You really need to pay attention to what might spoil. Are you going to butcher meat?"

"Yeah, I think so. I've also got a grinder and make a good sausage."

Bill answered, "That will sell. Don't feel bad about not having everything in the beginning. Your inventory will grow over time. The thing you need to watch out for is credit. Lots of guys will want to pay you later. You need to be strict about who you let run a tab. Many just need time to take their product to market, but some won't have any left after that and you get stuck holding on to nothing. Be careful."

With that the story ended and all retired for the evening.

It seems more often than not Ed and Gene show up at the same time. They exchange a quick hello in the parking lot and then open up. Ed usually makes the coffee as Gene goes around turning things on. They sat down at Ed's desk, looked at each other and Gene said, "Here we go again. Can we really keep doing this?"

"Well, we can't stop now. I've got some next month kind of ideas in my head, but I can't even go there until we make it through what we have created already."

Gene said, "Thank you. Don't even tell me about your new stuff for a while. This week it is all about managing what we've got. Next week it is all about marketing with the roll out of the flyer/menu to a thousand homes and businesses."

Just then the phone rang. They thought it a little early but assumed it was one of their suppliers wanting to finalize an order. Ed picked it up.

Gene sat there and listened to one side of the conversation. It ended with Ed giving out the Bucket fax number and saying thank you. Ed didn't say anything. A second or two went by when the fax machine started clicking. Gene reached over to grab the copy. He quickly looked it over and then handed it to Ed saying, "Holy shit."

Bill at the Trib had put together a follow up article on the Bucket. It was about half as long as the first one with one picture. It zeroed in on how the community responded to the first article and tried out the food and service of "The Shiny Bucket". It described the successful launching of the delivery business and finished up pitching multiple big screen TV coverage of football both Saturday and Sunday.

After a moment of silence Ed looked up and said, "I need another driver."

"I need another bartender."

Just then Harry and Donnie showed up. They were expected but Dorothy was there also. They looked at the fax.

Donnie looked at Ed and said, "Does this guy owe you money?"

Gene answered, "You'd think so, wouldn't you? I guess he likes us. In all fairness we have created over two dozen jobs in the last 90 days. We've got a new menu for this town and the people like it. We are newsworthy. I just didn't think we would get it."

Harry asked, "What do you think it means?"

Ed began to respond. He paused a moment and then said, "We had 36 delivery orders last night. I thought that was going to rise to about 50. I'm now guessing we will hit 60. The dining room and bar are operating at about capacity. I think the action is going to start earlier and last longer. We didn't know what the football crowd was going to be in the first place. Whatever it was going to be it will now be much bigger."

Gene asked, "What do we need to do?"

Donnie said, "We can't fit any more people on pizza or pasta. We could buy more screens and spread pizza shells back in the new trailer. We just bring them in a dozen or so at a time. That does two things, it gets the most time-consuming part of the game and lets us prepare in advance. It also makes room for another guy to place sauce and toppings."

Gene quickly said, "Make it happen. Ed what else do we need?"

Ed thought for a second and said, "I'm going to need one more driver, one more busser, one more dish washer and me in the kitchen. To do that I need one more person on the door to help Leslie. I'll still be able to come out to help and even schmooze a little but the wheelhouse is going to be in the kitchen. I'll open a third cash out position for the servers, I'll dispatch and I'll maneuver people around to fit the need. I'm good at that. I need to call Leslie."

Ed quickly called Leslie and shared the news about the new article. Leslie quickly sensed that there might be some nervousness about the increase in business. She said, "Come on we can do this. You are probably going to need to go to the kitchen."

"That's one of the reasons I called. Do you know anyone who could help you out on the door?"

After a quick pause she said, "As a matter of fact I do. I've been talking to a girlfriend of mine about the Bucket. She came in for dinner the other night. She was impressed. Let me give her a call and see if she wants to help me. Either way this is a pink project. I've got it so take it off your list. What was the other reason you called?"

"I just wanted to talk to you. You seem to be able to settle me down when I need it and perk me up when I want it."

Leslie answered, "That's so sweet. Fax me the article, I want to read it."

Ed went back to his tasks as did everyone else. He still hadn't figured out what Dorothy was doing in the shop. Then he saw she was over working on the computer. He looked up and saw all the TVs come on. What followed next was the showing of six new pictures two of which dealt with the game specials. One other was kind of cute. It showed a pizza with the words, "If you are a little late you might want to take home a pie."

Ed just smiled, gave Dorothy the two thumbs up and said, "You are incredible."

Donnie had picked up the additional screens and a rack on wheels to transport them from the shed to the kitchen. Karen was alerted to the new folks coming on with the need for initial training on all.

While all of this was going on the other prep projects were moving along and they served an unusually busy lunch. Ed looked around and marveled and said to himself, we know how to do this.

The new drivers, bussers and dish washers arrived at 4:00. Karen and Donnie took them through the computer, pizza cutting, box folding, soda preparation and garlic bread preparation. Ed then met with all of them to go over safety, cleanliness and friendliness. He encouraged them to ask questions if something came up, they didn't understand. He would have liked another day for training but sometimes you just go with what you've got.

The happy hour crowd and dining room crowd were pouring in pretty hard. Leslie and her friend arrived at 4:45 looking beautiful. After a quick introduction Ed went back to the kitchen leaving Leslie in charge of the door.

On Dorothy's way into work, she picked up an early paper. She quickly cut and pasted up a flyer and had 100 copies made. She put one on each table with extra copies at the bar and desk.

The night went as anticipated. Ed was glad he spent most of his time in the kitchen. He worked the phone a little but spent more time teaching and managing the drivers to handle the phones. He was able to maneuver people around to best handle the problem of the minute. It all went well. It was definitely as busy as they had ever been. You can tell when it's humpin' when you look at the pizza conveyor and see it filled crust to crust. The longest wait for a table was 35 minutes. The last waiting table was seated at 9:45. People kept coming in but nobody else had

to wait. Delivery hit 65 orders. All the tables in the bar were full until almost 11:00.

Ed was able to make 4 trips into the dining room during the evening. Leslie and her friend Cora were doing a great job. Lots of customers were commenting on the new article and even more on Dorothy's TV, computer thing. All team leaders were told to start close down procedures to include feeding the staff and getting them off the clock. The veterans were showing the rookies the cleanup closing procedures. For the primary staff it had been a totally busy 12 to 14 hour day. There was another one coming tomorrow. A big table in the back of the dining room opened up at 10:30. Gene put the word out for primary staff to gather there at 11:00.

Gene went to the table carrying a couple pitchers of beer and a diet coke for Karen. Ed had the glasses. Everyone gathered a little tired but definitely happy. Stories were being told around the table about different customers and different orders. Once the beers got poured Ed began the meeting.

"Well folks we've done it again. This has been our busiest day ever and we still have about 60 people to check out yet. You've stepped up and done it again. Great job all around. A special shout out for Dorothy for not only our own local commercials on our monitors but also for getting today's article printed up and available on each table. Everybody's got their procedures down. We were able to train 6 new people on the fly and work them into our system with minimal trouble. You guys are impressive. The good news/ bad news is that we have to do it again tomorrow. In addition to a regular lunch, we are going to have some number of football junkies in here tomorrow. Karen, have you thought through staffing?"

Karen answered. "Yes, I checked with Gene who is going to open at 11:00 which is kick off time for the first game. The more popular games start at noon and 1:00. I'm coming in at 10:30 to make sure we are ready for whatever happens. Donnie and Harry have moved up their start time by an hour also. We're pitching the special, but we serve everything. No substitutions. I've got Dorothy in at noon and one more at 1:00. This is all in addition to what we normally have in the dining room for a Saturday. I've got one more server coming in to train for the evening. I think we are ok with what we had tonight for bussers. Oh yeah, wait until you see our new uniforms for the bar."

Ed asked, "How about you Gene?"

Gene shrugged and then answered, "Like everybody else we don't know what we're going to get. I might have overstaffed but I didn't want to take any chances with our debut."

Ed again, "How about you Donnie?"

Donnie answered, "I'm staffed up like we are going to be slammed for 12 hours. I can let people go if it doesn't happen, but I think we are going to be moving our feet all day."

Ed, "Harry?"

Harry said, "I'm working bell to bell. I think our football guys are going to be mostly pizza but I'll be ready. My night shift will be like tonight."

Ed began, "I've got 1 driver coming in at noon and one more at 1:00. Today's article specifically mentioned that we will be delivering during the games. I don't know what that's going to bring. Donnie, how are we on prep? Do you need any help with pizza balls?"

Donnie answered, "My guys are making up six batches as we speak. I will have 200 pizza balls before we start

tomorrow. I'll have 40 spread before we open the doors. My meats and sauces are good. I've got the veggies they just need to be chopped."

Ed said, "You guys are the greatest. Have another drink if you want but I need you to get some rest we have another big day tomorrow."

Dorothy raised her hand. When Ed nodded at her she said, "I want to hear a story?"

Ed gave a stern look at Gene who shockingly looked at Leslie who sheepishly looked back at Gene who both looked at Ed. Then Gene and Leslie both said, "I didn't say..."

Donnie interrupted. "Don't blame them it was me. I was quietly cleaning up when I heard you tell them a story last night. I figured out what was going on. I saw you telling Gene stories other times too. I just never knew what it was. Last night I figured it out and told Dorothy. We all want to know more."

Ed and Gene were silent. Finally Leslie said, "Look, maybe I need some time to talk to Ed and Gene about this and maybe in the future if they are open to it they will share with you the story that is being written but tonight is not the night."

Dorothy answered, "I don't know about the rest of you but after I have had a night as busy as this one, I am not ready to close my eyes and go to sleep. I need to unwind. So don't worry about keeping me up. You two are the nicest bosses I have ever worked for. You treat us well, you encourage us to improve ourselves, you openly praise us and then you even bonus us much to our surprise. That sounds like family to me. We all respect you both to the hilt. Because of all of that it is normal for us to want to know the story that clearly the three of you enjoy."

Gene said, "In the future I imagine there will be a time when Ed will feel comfortable sharing his story. I can tell you it is beautiful. Please remember all that Ed does in transforming this restaurant. His is an enormous job. When he feels comfortable sharing and has the strength..."

Ed opens " My great grandfather Foster moved here in 1896 to participate in the land rush with his new wife Sarah. During the rush his horse Poli, fell and he ended up with the worst 160 acre quarter section of the 120 being offered. It was the worst because it had this big rock on it. My brother and I are the fifth generation of that ownership. The story that everyone keeps talking about is about how my great grandfather survived a difficult pioneer life and converted his land into a Post Office/Telegraph station/General Store/Saloon and Restaurant. How he serviced the horses and patrons of the stage lines followed by the same activity for the train station built adjacent to his property.

His son my grandfather further developed the property through the industrial revolution with the development of sewer, water, electricity, paved roads. Local industry sprung up not far from here in support of the war. Big Rock became a bedroom community offering a suburban type life away from the city. The GI bill after the war allowed for significant residential development. That chapter of the story belongs to my father. A significant part of the story was Dad selling off what had been a family restaurant that we operated all along to my brother Henry. With the help of the GI bill, he financed his way into making the high end restaurant that we all know. Dad had become a real estate developer of significance in this area. Uncle Pauly did most of the construction on dad's projects. In addition to making money building and selling houses dad developed a couple apartment complexes and a couple office buildings. Then the biggest single project was developing the plaza that had Henry's restaurant as the first big tenant. Then he came across the deal of deals. He found a tenant that wanted to build a 10 screen theatre complex on the vacant land that surrounds the Bucket. He wanted to make a killing so he didn't tell Mrs. Martinez

that he had a tenant and bought the property at half price. He didn't tell Gene and bought the Bucket in my name with half down and the rest on a note to Gene.

The whole deal was going to make dad millions. In order to tie up the properties dad needed to mortgage out all his other properties to get enough cash. When Mrs. Martinez found out that dad had screwed her, she contacted an environmental group and alerted them to the existence of a family of Owls living on the back of the property. When that information became public the development of the property was shut down and dad lost everything he had. He couldn't handle it and killed himself.

Gene and I hooked up in the aftermath. He had the \$75,000 down payment from my dad and a note for another \$75,000 from me. As we were talking about what the Rusty Bucket was and what the Shiny Bucket could be, Gene became aware of my college Senior thesis about my families' historical development of this area. I told him a couple of the first stories. I gave him a copy of my thesis. He liked my writing but loved my story telling. He, not I, thought it was book capable.

Gene then made a bizarre offer for partnering up on the development of this place into what you guys have all witnessed. This required him putting in 2/3 of the money he got from my dad. We would both work hard and long for little money as we tried to make the Bucket shiny. The only way he would make the deal was if I agreed to re write my thesis in a way that I told the stories he so much enjoyed. He wanted half the book deal. I didn't think there was any value there. I told him that he should keep me focused on making the restaurant work. He insisted that I keep working on the book. I agreed with one caveat.

I would tell Gene stories, starting in 1888 in Buffalo New York. I got Gene to agree to be part of the story. I would write everything about the development of the Bucket as it happened every day. At the end of most days Gene would hustle me into telling him the next episode of the family story. So, you are all in the book. All the restaurant stories including paint, ovens, sports bar, lighting everything that has happened is in the book. At the end of most nights Gene and I would look at what happened here a long time ago. The best example I can think of is the Godfather movies. Remember the flashbacks to Sicily or early New York. Well, that's what I'm writing. We are developing a restaurant while frequently looking back a century or so to understand our roots and the roots of the whole community.

There are numerous stories in each of the four generations that preceded me. Each one is a lifetime. Hopefully the selected stories adequately tell what they did. These were tough hard-working people that created much while many failed around them. Even my father's tale is one of accomplishments until he fell victim to his own greed.

I am much more interested in this restaurant than I am with this book. I made a deal with Gene. I will honor that deal. My story telling is only as far as the first generation to date. With about three more installments we will move into the time of my Grandfather. That is an interesting era with lots of stories about power, deals and money. The world was changing, and my family was in the middle of it.

The point is that this project is going to be going on for a while. I'm happy to share the concept with my extended family. Don't bug me about when it is going to be finished. I think I have bored you enough and you need to go home and get some rest. I need you at your best tomorrow. Thank you."

The room had been totally silent when Ed was telling his story. When he stopped the silence continued. Finally, Harry broke the silence with a respectful meaningful applause. Others jumped in immediately. Ed was embarrassed, but it felt good.

Donnie broke the applause with, "Before tonight it was an honor to know you. Now I have so many more reasons.."

Gene was sensing the feelings around the room. He said, "Look folks this has been a big day for lots of reasons. Ed shared with you. I think you should be honored that he chose to do so. He doesn't need this story kicking around town until he wants to unveil it. With respect I ask that you keep your mouths shut. Meanwhile we have a restaurant that is looking at its biggest day starting in less than 11 hours. Go home, get some rest and come back and make the Bucket what we all know it can be. Thank you."

Leslie jumped in with, "I feel a need to say something. You all know Ed and respect him. I know him better than any of you with the exception of Gene. He's a smart guy. He could have ducked this past conversation with ease. He didn't. It quite frankly surprised me. It tells me that he doesn't consider you employees. He genuinely cares for each of you. He respects you. You should be honored."

The meeting broke up quickly. As they left some folks like Donnie and Dorothy made eye contact with Ed with a positive nod. Everyone went back to their places of control and made sure that the closing procedures were followed and the shop was ready for tomorrow. Ed, Gene and Leslie went to the bar.

As Gene was pouring a night cap for the three of them he said, "Well that was special."

Leslie said, "Your team loves you."

"Yeah, they do. I hope I can live up to their expectations."

Gene said, "You already have. Can I get off the emotional for a second and say that I finally get it."

Leslie said, "Get what?"

Gene responded, "The story. I loved the Indians shooting arrows from the top of the rock. I followed a guy from Buffalo, through his wedding and honeymoon at Niagara Falls. I saw his skills and his courage to pioneer west. I was thrilled by the Land Rush and the subsequent development of his property. I followed him into entrepreneurialism and the store, saloon, butcher shop and the rest. But so far we haven't talked about his son Jeremy that piloted the ship through the industrial revolution and all that went along with it. God we have a good chapter coming. Then all the accomplishments of your dad until he fell victim to wanting more than he should have. Now the story continues with you and your brother Henry. I was kind of stuck in the early 1900s. I've got a glimpse of the whole picture. This is so cool."

Ed said, "You know we have a restaurant to run."

"Yeah, I know."

Ed continued, "You know we are going to be busier tomorrow than we have ever been."

"Yeah, I know"

Ed continued, "You know that any number of things could come along and push this train off the tracks."

Gene said, "No I don't know that. No matter what comes along that could hurt you or the Bucket your team would protect you with everything they have. I've never seen that before. Ed, you might not have figured this out but if you were to start listening to your family, friends and coworkers you would find that you are a truly special

person.”

As Ed was trying to come up with something to say Leslie stated with authority, “He’s right”

Gene looked at Leslie and said, “take him home and rest him, we have a couple more tough days coming up. Ed, I’ll see you in the morning.”

Donnie got home exhausted and greeted his mom who asked about work. Donnie said, “It was incredible. Did you see the new article in the paper? That just pushed what was going to be a hugely busy night into one that was way over the top. Everything worked great. Everybody worked great. I am so happy to be working there.”

Donnie’s mom always knew she had a good boy. She was so happy he found something that makes him happy.

Dorothy’s boyfriend greeted her at the door with a “How did it go?”

She answered, “They loved your pictures and my slides. I put together a tabletop piece with today’s article and they loved that too. We were so busy and I made a ton of tips. I am really tired but I have never had such a good day at work, ever.”

After a short pause she said, “The regular world of work that I had imagined will have to be great to pull me away from what I’m doing.”

“Honey, it’s still a restaurant. You are too good to stop there”

“Maybe so. Once I’m degreed I will probably have the credentials to find a professional spot. I’ve spoken to lots , of people that got their position after graduation and didn’t like it. Some hated it. Sometimes it’s the work you do but sometimes it is more important who you work with and for. Maybe I’ll get lucky and find a group like this. I hope so, but I bet demonstrating my work at the bucket will secure that new opportunity. One thing I know is that a new employer will feel obligated to pay at least as much as I am earning at the Bucket.”

Harry’s wife asked how he was holding up. She was concerned about all the hours he had been putting in but had noticed that he seemed happy. She was still leftover happy with the bonus Harry had brought home yesterday. She asked, “Do you think you’re going to get more time off in the future?”

Harry answered, “Yeah, we just have to get through this grand opening week. Then next week we’ve got the marketing plan for the delivery business. After we know what that means we will staff up to handle the sales we are now making. I work for some incredible people. Not only are they hard working and talented, but they also actually care about us. I’m so happy Gene and Ed got together.”

Karen started by telling her roommate that she had never made so much money in one night. Then she added, “If I was making half the tips I’m making I would still be thrilled with my job. The whole team is incredible, but my bosses are the best.”

Leslie asked Ed what time she should come in. Ed answered, "Well I need you like last night. If you want to come in and check out how the football thing is going, feel free."

Leslie said, "I've got a couple errands to run this morning. I'll stop in around noon to see how you're doing. If I'm needed, I can stay for a while. I just need time to get changed for the evening onslaught."

Ed nodded, smiled then gave her a big parting kiss.

When he arrived at the Bucket Gene and Donnie were already there. He said, "Do you guys have cots here?"

Gene said, "You know I have been half seriously thinking about that. You have a moment?"

Ed motioned for them to take a table in the bar. "What's up?"

"You know we have been so busy making all this happen that we never bothered to check if we are actually making any money. I know you are the percentage guy more than me. And I know you are worried about labor costs, but I just went over last month's receipts. I think we are making a killing."

Ed answered, "well that sounds like a professional assessment. I know we are priced right to have a good cost of goods. Sometimes that can be way off when you actually check inventory levels. Actually, our COG is great, food and booze. As far as labor is concerned, we have a huge payroll. When you compare our labor costs to sales we are doing great. Even if we were paying ourselves a more realistic number we would still be doing great. We don't pay Leslie anything."

Gene broke in with "That's got to change."

"I know but I don't even know what to offer her."

Gene said, "I do, a full-time job, with a place to start her design business from. Am I making your life too complicated?"

Ed responded with, "No, you're right. And yes, I am in love with her."

"Have you told her yet?"

Ed sheepishly said, "Not yet."

In a style that is so Gene he said, "Sir you have bigger fish to fry than pizza. You need to tell her how you feel."

"I know, I was just hoping things here would calm down a little before I walk that scary path."

Gene smiled and said, "When do you see that happening? I'm just saying. Take care of what's really important. Ok on to business. 1:00 is going to be the Kansas game. We should have our biggest crowd for that. How about a free pool? One hundred squares and the first 100 customers get one square for free. We give out a pitcher of beer for the winner of each quarter and a pitcher and pie for the end of the game."

Ed said, "I love it. We can do it for the pro games too. Have Karen and Dorothy put it together. What about other pools? They are fun."

Gene answered, "I've been thinking about that too. I'd like to see it, but I don't think we should run it. I know guys that would love to put it together. Here are the rules, It's got to be a 100% payout. No profit. You don't fill in the numbers until the pool is sold out. It has to be totally random. If we catch any crap for it, we had nothing to do with putting it together."

Ed said, "That seems fair, safe and fun. Make it happen. We're going to find out a lot this weekend about how a sports bar works. I'm going to kind of float today. I'll work the door, dispatch drivers and be ready to jump in wherever needed."

"Sounds like a plan."

At 10:45 there were 12 cars in the parking lot waiting for the doors to open. We opened the doors. People kept coming in. There were 45 bar patrons by 11:00. It was mostly beer business at the beginning but the special with pizza quickly got going. Karen was covering the floor like a greyhound. When Dorothy arrived her first task was setting up the pool. By noon the bar and pool were full.

The regular lunch crowd was coming in and delivery orders were popping. Leslie stopped in about 12:30 and saw that the place was jumping but in control. She loved the new bar waitress uniforms. Ed thought they were a little tacky but the bar customers certainly didn't mind.

Most of the bar crowd left at the end of the 1:00 game. Fifteen or so hung on. Lunch moved into dinner with about an hour lull. Pizzas almost never stopped. The afternoon had been a huge success. The problem was that the Bucket's busiest night was climbing right up on its shoulders. Gene waived Ed over just about 4:00. "How long can we push these guys.?"

"We'll get through the weekend, but Monday we need to revamp our schedules and staffing levels. People can't work all these long hours and they've got to have some time off."

Gene said, "By people do you include management and team leaders?"

Ed said, "Especially them. We need to create new shifts that are less than bell to bell. We need to survey who wants to work how much. Some folks like Donnie want to work a ton of hours. Others like Dorothy have school to work on. Others like you and I need to get a life that does something other than the Bucket."

Gene said, "That sounds like a good project to kick off starting Monday. Now we just have to survive tonight and tomorrow. How are you set for tonight?"

Ed began, "Well, the last time we had an article it took a day before we felt the full brunt of it. Not counting this afternoon's action, I think tonight will be a 10% gain on last night. I think last night's staffing will work. I know Donnie and Harry are on top of it, but I want to check all inventory levels. I'm going to ask Karen to check the supply inventory. It's easy to miss something like salt, pepper, napkins, to go containers and the like. How's your bar?"

"I got paranoid last week and stocked up pretty good. I'm still good on everything." Gene answered.

Ed said, "I'm going to meet with Harry and Donnie to see if they need any help with prep. I heard Donnie's making 300 pizza balls."

Gene said, "He already did but he used over 100 of them at lunch. He and his guys are building more."

Saturday night was pretty much a rubber stamp of Friday. Ed thought to himself that he and Gene were always looking at the big picture with all of its different parts. Most of the staff needed a much narrower focus. They had their station or their oven or whatever, but they needed to keep working their part of the deal. Problems arise when their part of the deal is dependent upon someone else's part not being done right or quick enough. That's what management does, among other things. There were a few screw ups, but they were remedied quickly. When you screw up a delivery order it's harder to fix. No matter what, you've got the time of going back to the shop and then out on the delivery again. When there is a screw up it is important for the driver to call it in as soon as he finds out. That way it can be fixed during his return trip. Training is a forever thing.

At the end of the night, they had a quick meeting with team leaders to check stock and staff. Tomorrow was the last pre-season games for football. There were three televised games for most tvs. Because of the Bucket's tv package we had all the games with as many as four at one time. The Kansas City game came on at 2:00. Nobody really knew what kind of action they would have and when. One thing they knew was whatever it was it was going to be a hell of a lot busier next week when the actual season began. It was decided to over prepare and over staff. Nobody argued.

At the end of the night Ed, Gene and Leslie gathered at the bar for a drink. Leslie began, "You guys are getting good at this."

Gene jumped in with, "Don't start this you guy stuff. You know how critical you are around here."

OK, OK I'm just saying that everyone pretty much knows their job and the work gets done. Not only does it get done but the customers are treated well on top of it. And your food is consistently great."

Gene spoke up. "I've got a couple problems that I need some help with. Neither are about business, really."

Ed ventured, "Shoot Gene."

Gene began. "First, I have a problem of taking advantage of Leslie. We've never even discussed paying you, which is so wrong. You are certainly more than a hostess. You are part of the three man inside team that discusses the inner working of what is going on here. You have huge value, and so far, I am paying you nothing."

Leslie responded, "Hell I'm having fun. What would I be doing if I wasn't here? I know, I did years of it. I feel involved in something cool. Once we get through this busy part, I feel comfortable you guys will buy me something nice or send me on a trip. Besides all three of us know I'm picking up the second benefit of spending time with Ed. That's important to me."

Ed remained quiet as Gene pressed on. "OK for now, but you know I'm going to do something nice for you down the road."

Leslie answered, "Yeah I know, case settled, what's the other thing?"

Gene continued, "This has to do with you Ed. I know how hard I'm working so I truly know how hard you are working. Yet at the end of a busy day, I bug you to tell us a story. Although I love every minute of storytelling, I need to leave you alone to rest up. I'm sorry. It's just that your new episodes fill my head with something other than the Bucket. I don't golf or do much of anything that isn't about the restaurant. It is still selfish of me to bug you and I feel bad."

Ed took a breath and then said. "Gene, you are a better partner than anyone could imagine. I seem to be in the forefront to take the accolades for our progress here. That just isn't fair. You work as hard and even longer than I do. In addition to totally changing your bar with new products, new staff and the like you also handle all the bookwork stuff with bank deposits and sales tax payments that are grueling. You just do it with no complaints. If I offer any comic relief or positive mental wondering through storytelling, then I am glad to provide same. Actually, I like it. Dorothy hit it last night when she said at the end of a long day you can't just turn the switch and go to sleep. Cranking out the next episode is kind of fun. Sometimes I think a particular story runs long and I fear boring the listener."

Gene and Leslie immediately looked at each other with mock complaints. Comments like, "That story sucked, or That one was too long. Or why doesn't he learn when to shut up" The smiles and laughter made the point of how much they enjoyed listening to Ed do his thing.

After rolling his eyes a little Ed said, "OK, tonight I'm going to do a long one trying to bore you."

Leslie said, "It's good to have a challenge"

Gene noticed that Karen, Donnie and Dorothy had snuck in the bar and were eaves dropping. Finally Gene called them over with a you should go home but if you want to stay let me get you a drink.

Ed began.

Going back to when they first got back to their spread that spring the first thing they had to do was check in with Harrison and get Poli. When they wagoned out that first day Sarah made sure she had beef steaks, potatoes and canned vegetables for dinner and a five pound package of sausage to leave behind. They were greeted like long lost family. Foster also brought a bottle of whiskey.

Lots of small talk and a couple of drinks followed by lots of questions about how you spent your winter. Foster held back letting Harrison go first. The good news is that the winter was mild. Almost all of his cattle made it through without any man-made shelter. Ground food kept the stock alive with a couple wagons of feed brought in near the end of February. He was hopeful of fattening them up off the spring grow and taking them to market near the end of summer. Foster knew the ranching formula for success. You bought small cows for \$3 and pushed them around your property eating free food and then sold them for \$30.

The problem was that if you had more than a couple dozen cows you needed help to push them around. You really needed help when you needed to push them to market. If you don't have enough local grown food, you either buy some or watch them die. Somehow you had to get the cows to the Kansas City stock yards. That's over 80 miles which makes it a long push or a short train ride. Right now, we don't have a train and when we do, we don't know what they are charging. Nobody's life is easy.

Harrison kept talking about his first winter. It was lonely. It was cold. Most of his personal effort was cutting firewood to keep the home warm enough. There were animals to feed and water. He had done some inside projects mostly on plugging holes to keep the cold wind out. They've made it and were looking forward to the coming of spring warmth.

When the four gathered together Linda shared that she was pregnant again. As the congratulations were going around Sarah decided it was time to tell Foster that they were also with child. This time she was due in September. Everyone was joyful. Both men silently understood the difficulties in raising a family with all the work that goes into a prairie life.

Finally, Harrison began asking questions about Foster's winter and spring plan. Both he and Linda were shocked. They were happy for Foster and Sarah but shocked. Somewhere after Post Office, Telegraph and Stage station Foster shared that he had four farm hands to make it all happen. With each addition to the story Linda kept saying "oh dear." Harrison commented that Foster has more activity going on than the totality of the other 120 homesteaders.

He was anxious to take a trip over to Foster's to see how all these plans laid out on the ground. While all of this was going on Sarah was busy loving Poli. She made sure she had some food to offer on their reunion. Poli recognized Sarah and Foster and kept running around to let some of the happiness out.

They all had a great meal and a great day. Harrison said he would be coming over in a couple days to check it all out. Sarah rode Poli while Foster drove the wagon back home. When they got home and settled in Foster said to Sarah, "Did you notice the look on their faces when I told them what we are doing here."

Sarah responded, "Yeah, I think they wanted us to be facing the same problems that they will be facing. We have different problems. I like ours better."

"The next three years for Foster and Sarah were truly charmed. Sometimes charms are expensive. All prairie life is hard and long. They thought they had a good plan and a reasonable amount of money, so it began. They got out there soon after the spring thaw in a new wagon with team. Foster found his first couple workers. On their first trip they had enough lumber and supplies to build simple quarters over the concrete that had been poured last year. There would be time for improvements next month but now they were just trying to gain cover and relief from the elements. They also immediately began work on the stable and choral to handle the horses for the stage line."

Foster had his projects numbered. He dismissed one of his ranch hands and hired three more. First he and Sarah were making twice weekly trips back into town to buy more supplies. Stan, one of the more promising hands, was brought along on two trips to understand what was done. Stan took over the twice weekly trip leaving Foster and Sarah to focus on other things.

Foster found a man from whom to buy his initial livestock. He needed his horse team for the stage line. At that time, he bought an ox for plowing and a milk cow. He planned to buy pigs, steers, chickens and another milk cow a month later. Once they had the ox it took only a couple days to plow a garden out for Sarah. You had to plow out the same dirt a couple times to make it easier to plant.

With five men and a woman working dawn to dusk you could see major improvements happening every week. Foster had a way of knowing what to work on next. The choral got a second section with a common wall to service the pigs. In between was a tack shack and feed supply for both horses and pigs. Foster knew that this is where he was going to build the bunk house when the time was right.

By the time the first stage patrons came though Foster was ready to change the horses and Sarah was ready to feed the passengers. The first couple weeks the adjacent building wasn't complete, so everyone had to move their bed linens to make room for the table and chairs to feed the customers.

Foster butchered one steer, one pig and many chickens to provide the needed meat for customers and staff. Sometimes he had to buy meat to augment what he had. Sarah had a huge job just feeding 6 adults and a child every day. That job got bigger when the stage business began with an extra six meals, four days a week. The vegetables they put up last year were a big help and showed just how many more they would need in the future.

The garden they planted was huge. The men plowed it and even helped planting once Sarah lined out the sections for each item. Alma returned in early Spring. Even though she was only 16 she knew how to work hard and long. Alma helped with the daily preparation of food and was really important in tending the garden. Every day she made 6 loaves of bread. She convinced Sarah to include various peppers in her growing scheme.

One day while weeding the field Sarah looked at Alma and asked, "How come your English is so good?"

"My dad is white?"

"Really, I didn't know that."

Alma said, "Well he isn't around here much. He has a job in town. He comes out most of the weekends. He was the one that ran in the land rush. He wanted to get a place out of the city that was big enough for all of us plus my Aunt and Uncle and their 4 kids. He and I are the only ones bringing money home."

"I just want you to know how happy I am to have you here. Your work is always excellent as is your attitude."

"Thank you. I like working here."

Everything was moving along, more or less according to plan. The expanded house was completed with a big open area to serve guests. The adjoining kitchen prepared food for residents and guests. It had a hand pump that provided the water necessary for cooking. By the end of the first summer Foster had his windmill, well and piping of water. The sleeping quarters were completed upstairs. The barn was erected with a shop in the corner for butchering and woodwork. Brad was able to get all the equipment Foster needed to make a forge and metal working station. The room adjacent to where people ate was completed and made into a general store. Foster build shelves for displaying goods for sale.

By the fall of that year amazing improvement had happened on the property. There were two corals for horses and pigs, a house/restaurant/bar. There was a general store and a barn with a shop in the corner.

Sarah with the help of Alma harvested a huge garden that put up hundreds of jars of vegetables. They also had over 100 jars of tomato sauce and 50 jars of a new sauce that Sarah called barbeque. When they were preparing basket after basket of tomatoes for sauce, Alma suggested a new recipe. It included onions, peppers, sugar and other spices. They tried it and served it over pork ribs for dinner for the family and hands. It was best if you brushed it on the ribs while they were being cooked. What a hit. They put it out as jars for sale in the general store. The tomato sauce always went well but this barbeque sauce became a must have. Other locals weren't able to eat all the tomatoes that they produce, and they started to go bad. They sold them to the store cheap and another couple hundred jars of both sauces were created.

Sarah suggested that she needed a piece of metal to fit over four burners of her stove. She wanted to be able to remove it when not in use. This made cooking eggs, pancakes and lots of other dishes easier to prepare than trying to fry them in a pan. A little measuring and a day's work at the forge and she had what she wanted.

Foster kept loading up with product that he thought would sell. Stan's trips back into the city were almost three times a week to stock the shelves. The secret was knowing where to go for what. He had one place for tools and hardware, one place for lumber, one place for grains, one for millinery and so on. He knew where to buy whiskey, candy, and fancy products like smelly soap. He was able to mark up the product not only because he had it but also because no one else knew where to get it.

Things kept moving along. The first day Foster had to switch teams for the stage was interesting. He had Stan helping but it was still a big job. There were 5 passengers and two drivers. Sarah had made up a tasty chicken stew, with cooked noodles and beans from last year's harvest. The stage moved on with Stanly taking care of the horses giving them fresh food and water. By the time they got to the third day of switching teams they had it down. Sarah's meals were great.

They knew they had to notify all the residents about the Post Office, Telegraph Station, Stage line and while you are at it the store, bar and restaurant. Because the home on each spread was at least a half mile from the next getting to each was time consuming. On a full day you could only get to about 10% of the spreads. Sarah made up a chart so she could take down the names of each occupant including staff. While letting everyone know about the stage line stop, Post Office and telegraph they also told them about the General store, bar and restaurant. Finally, Foster saw that he needed more messengers to get to all 120 places. By working all the Sundays and two other days in the week the two teams were able to let everyone know in just short of two weeks.

By the time they got to the end of June a rough finished General Store and restaurant were useable. The forge and butcher station were ready inside the shell of a barn that needed another 7 weeks to complete. By now Brad had sent five full wagons with product for the first couple major projects. It didn't take long to set up the forge and butcher shop. The water system and silo were much more complicated.

Foster built a windmill over the well that pumped water into the tank on top of the adjacent tower that he built. He ran pipes in a trench dug just below the frost line from the tank to the home/restaurant. From the kitchen one additional pipe was run to what would become the rest room for the restaurant. The two toilets had arrived from Brad that were quickly installed. Sewage lines were then built to dispose of the waste out to the leach field just to the left of the barn. After a few days of tinkering, they had inside water and two functioning toilets.

The pipes ran through Sarah's Garden about in the middle. By putting some fittings into the pipe and adding some hoses They could water the garden when necessary. The hope was not to need it with regular rainfall supporting the garden. That didn't always happen, and a long hot 10 days could kill your entire crop. They ended up using the watering system eight times over that summer. It made for a much more abundant harvest.

Foster got another wood stove and placed it outside near the garden. He and Sarah designed a series of tables on either side so it made it easier to prep/clean then cook and finally put up in jars all the produce and sauces. In the height of the process Foster scheduled one man to assist the ladies in carrying product in and out of the cooking station. Alma recruited her brother, sister and 2 cousins to help pick this huge harvest. By the time the harvest was done they had put up over 1,000 jars. Some were put on the shelves of the store while others were stored in the root cellar.

During breakfast Foster would assign tasks to all the men. One would always start by feeding all the animals and then join in with the others on whatever project was at hand. One project was building a stand for the placement of a 200-gallon tank for kerosene. In addition to the tank Brad had sent out a hand operated conveyor belt for filling the silo that was now completed. After placing the men for their project Foster would pretty much stay in the store. By the end of July, they were getting 10 to 20 customers a day at the store. While getting their supplies many of the customers would have a drink or two and often buy a bottle to take home. Some of the customers made a day out of it and brought their family to have dinner before heading back home.

The customers kept coming, the money kept coming, the profit kept coming and Foster kept searching out new product that would sell if he had it. Foster had two doors and two windows on display. Once ordered people could have them in about 10 days. The customer could install themselves or hire Foster's crew to do so.

Everybody who came in made a point of checking out all the new stuff Foster had up and running at his place. The stackable silo was a huge hit, but nothing was more intriguing than the water system and toilets.

Foster would show the customer the entire system from well to toilet. Along the way he pointed out the watering system for the garden and how using it 8 times made Sarah's garden such a success. Winter was coming and inside plumbing was so much better than a trip to the outhouse. Brad then shipped out a hot water tank that Foster quickly installed providing hot water with the turn of a valve. It was easy to see the creature comforts that the customer wanted. The question was, "Did they have the money?"

Surprisingly enough, many did. Foster sold and installed 7 watering systems. He sold 14 silos. Ten different families bought windows. Four of them wanted Foster to install them. Foster would bid each job, buy the materials, schedule the work and then install. It was enough business for a 4 man crew. These new laborers didn't have to stay at the home. They lived in their own homes and arrived each morning to schedule that day's job.

And so it continued. It didn't take long for Foster to find out where the better money was to be made. On one of his trips up to see Harrison he made a proposal. He said, "Harrison, I'm so busy with what's going on with the store and restaurant I don't have time to even think about the back half of my property. I want to keep it, but I am not using it. Would it be of any value to you?"

"Hell yes. You might not have noticed but the grasses are growing in there great. I wouldn't mind grazing it. The water is good so the cattle could have their fill. Yeah, I could use it well. What can I give you in return?"

"Meat."

Harrison asked, "Meat?"

Foster said, "Yeah, I'm using a lot of meat at the store and restaurant. If you could provide a fair amount of cattle when I need them it would be worth it for me."

"If you mean about one a month it would be fair for me too. If you need an extra one once in a while or didn't need on in a particular month we could work that out too." A handshake between two friends was all the contract that was needed. Foster then added if you want to harvest the grasses in the fall, we could split them as well.

Harrison and Linda gave birth to Lucy.

Foster and Sarah had gone over so Sarah could help with the birth. The guys were pretty much useless but enjoyed their time together. Foster then said, "It looks like you're going to have a good year Harrison. God bless you, you deserve it." Harrison responded, "Thanks Foster. Being able to use your back land really helped."

Foster said, "I'm glad you could use it. I liked the 11 head you sent my way and the winter feed. I've got a question for you. Most of the ranchers did pretty well didn't they?"

Just then the ladies arrived after successfully getting both babies to sleep.

Harrison then said, "Yeah, it was a good year for everybody, why?"

Foster then said, "Well, over the winter I'm going back to Kansas City and even St. Louis to find more manufacturers of things. I'm trying to figure out what people might want."

Before He could answer Linda jumped in with, "We need pots, pans, dishes, glasses, knives forks, windows,

curtains, doors, fabric and inside plumbing.”

Harrison then added” I’d like a new saw and a manure shovel.”

Foster thought that pretty well sums it up. The men want things to make their work easier, the women want things to make their life easier.

As Sarah was approaching her due date, she wrote her cousin and suggested a visit at the time of birth. Brad was anxious to see the development, so the arrangements were made. Upon arrival it took a couple days just to show Brad and Cindy around. Foster also drove Brad out to see some of his installations. Brad was impressed. Brad didn’t come empty handed. He brought with him some of the new gasoline operated devices that were going to change the farming and ranching business. When Foster saw the demonstration on each he immediately knew that life was changing.

Brad first explained the oil refining business. Up until this time the primary product that came from oil was kerosene. By heating the oil it separated and the top layer could be taken off. That was lighting oil or kerosene. Much of the rest was thrown away. Most of that could now be further refined into gasoline. Gasoline was the necessary product to fuel all these new devices. Brad then talked about the horseless carriage that was being developed. Forster had read about these cars being developed but was more interested in equipment. Brad then explained that by running the gasoline powered motor what you got was a rapid turning crank that you could hook up to any number of devices. The easiest one to understand was the conveyor belt that could now load the loft of your barn almost effortlessly. Foster set a date that he was going to hook up the motor to load the silo and loft. He told all his customers the date and invited them to come by and watch. He knew that these hard-working men would instantly see the value in not only this product but lots of other ones as well. As Foster was trying to imagine the possibilities Brad hit him with the next one.

Brad then said “Call it magic if you will but imagine the motor creating enough power to compress a gas inside a big cylinder or long closed lines. Somehow, when that happens It gets cold.”

Foster just looked at Brad and said, “Cold?”

“Yeah, it’s called refrigeration. So, you could build a big room or two and store meat, milk, beer, anything you wanted to protect from spoiling. You could control the temperature and have one for products you wanted to cool and the other for products you wanted to freeze, like ice.”

Foster said, “You mean I could make ice, even in the summer.?”

Brad added, “Yeah and you could sell a 2 foot by 3 foot coolers and blocks of ice to your customers. The coolers would work for a long time but they would have to keep replacing the ice, probably weekly. We will need to start out with another tank like you have for the kerosine but this time it will be for gasoline. A couple years out you will probably need a big tank in the ground with a pump to dispense it to your customers.”

Foster kept shaking his head. It really was a great deal to get your head around. After the shock of the new technologies wore off Foster and Brad started discussing other issues. Brad reported that the contract had been let to build the rail line. It would probably take two years to complete. Brad was excited about being able to report all the development of Foster’s property in order to hopefully get the rights to build and service the “Big Rock Train Station”.

Brad then asked how many settlers have already packed it in?

Foster said, "Many. Some people just weren't prepared to do this. It's hard. I know of about 30 who have given up. You can see others that aren't going to make it. The people who have money are taking over abandoned adjacent sites. I'm looking at getting the one next to me. I know Sarah and I would both love it if you and Cynthia were ready to come out. By the time it all settles out over the next 10 years instead of having 120 spreads of 160 acres each you will probably have 30 much bigger spreads. You are also going to have many smaller spreads and regular houses for the workers. I think one more for me would be just about right, especially if you were living in it."

Brad said, "I appreciate that Foster. Certainly, get the property if you can. Let me go at least one more year to work on the train thing plus getting more new product for you to sell. Amazing new things are coming out every day. Some people are calling it the Industrial Revolution. We need to be in the middle of that."

The next day the four adults and two and a half babies walked over to the adjacent site that Foster was planning on buying. "With all the stuff I've build I've used up less than 1/3 of my frontage and none of the back land. Even with a crazy amount of development I can't see using all the frontage. Picking up another 2600 feet for free still sounds like a good thing." Foster then turned to Cynthia and said, "Picture a brand-new house right here, a short walk to family."

Foster knew he jabbed Brad with that one. All four wanted the move. Brad just knew when it was best to move. At the end of the first week of their visit Jeremy was born. Cynthia was a great help, not only with the baby but with all the tasks that Sarah normally handled. As they moved into the fall the last of the water systems were being completed. Many more people decided on putting windows in to help with the upcoming winter. The other new product Brad had brought with him was something called insulation. It came in 4 x 8 sheets. By cutting them to size and placing them on the inside of exterior walls it cut down the cold air from coming in while it kept the warm air on the inside. Foster knew he had to get that installed at the restaurant and store. When customers saw what it did, he knew he would sell a bunch of it.

As predicted insulation orders flooded in. Everybody remembered the cold of the winter. This new magic board could keep the cold out. Wow! Because it was easy to work with most customers installed it themselves. Brad showed Foster some tricks for installation that Foster passed on to his customers. Foster would explain that heat rises and escapes the home through the roof. You could either insulate the roof or insulate the ceiling of the house and leave the upper gable or attic uninsulated. The latter way concentrated the heat better in the living space.

Brad just kept shipping wagons of the product weekly. It all sold at a good price because nobody knew what it cost and the benefit was extreme. Brad then added another new product insulation rolls and tape. The tape was good for wrapping the water lines that were exposed to the elements.

Lots of customers were coming in to stock up for the winter. Stan was up to making 4 trips a week to keep the shelves filled. One of the hands knew how to dress and butcher deer and elk. It didn't take long to teach him how to do the rest of the animals. His name was Amos. He knew construction work too, but his skill was butchery. Most of the homesteaders knew some butcher work. It was generally easier to have Amos do it because they weren't doing that much at a time. Plus, we had all the right tools and could make sausage with the scraps. The meat market became a big part of Foster's operation. Next year with the refrigeration system it would even be bigger.

Sadly, after three weeks it was time for Brad and Cynthia to return home. They spoke about getting together again in the winter. The stage line ran up through the new year. It then took six weeks off. Foster wanted to get the

outside construction completed for three more buildings. One was for the cooler/freezer. One was an extension of the store by another 100 feet and the third was a bunkhouse building for the staff to stay. It was time for Foster, Sarah and Foster Jr. and Jeremy to live as a family without a bunch of other people. The idea was the same as last year, get the building foundations dug out with concrete poured. Foster wanted to frame in the cooler house so he could insulate it over the winter and get it useable in early spring.

Foster kept a crew of three over the winter, Stan, Amos and Noah. Foster taught them finish carpentry. They had loaded up on lots of wood and other finishing materials. They made sure everything was insulated. They did a decorative finish in the bar and restaurant. They brought in the second stove from Sarah's Garden area as another heat source. They built furniture including a new bar, new tables and chairs and new beds with a couple chests of drawers. Even in the dead of winter the roads were passable most times. On nicer days to break the boredom many would come for dinner or drinks. Everybody always walked through the store before they left to see if anything new had arrived. Lots of people came by on the odd chance they might have some mail.

Foster and Sarah had talked early on how important it was to get people wanting or needing to come to the store or restaurant for something. Sarah had put together a program where women could bring in their jars of vegetables, fruits and sauces. They priced them how they wanted. They marked each jar and paid a commission on all that was sold.

Foster knew he didn't have enough food to feed all the animals over the winter. He quickly found it was cheap to buy the grass and grains from farmers that had grown literally tons over the summer. Many of these transactions were barter for items available at the store.

The winter was fun. The interior projects made everything prettier and nicer. There were enough customers so you had lots of people to talk to. There was time to play with the children. Alma was still coming in four times a week to help with the cooking and cleaning. Sarah started a school.

All the employees needed to know how to read and write. They needed to know numbers and how to add, subtract and multiply. They needed to know how to add up a bill, take in the money and make the right change. So, on the days that Alma was over they would have school after dinner.

Over the course of the summer and fall Amos created lots of animal skins. Sarah had taken the time to learn how to prepare and use these skins for making products to sell while still in Buffalo.

Just after the new year it was time to visit Brad and Cynthia. Stan drove them to the train. Foster and Sarah felt comfortable with Alma running the kitchen and bar and Stan running everything else. Stan had a list of projects to work on in their absence.

This train ride was fun. They upgraded their seating to a more comfortable arrangement. When they arrived at St. Louis Brad and Cynthia were waiting.

Lots of family talk, especially because both girls were pregnant. Eventually they got down to business.

Everyone was pleased that all the new businesses were doing well. Brad wanted Foster and Sarah to think what was doing the best and why. Foster looked over at Sarah with a bit of a dumb look. They worked hard on all of them. They never really kept track of which one made more money after you paid for the labor and materials. Finally, Sarah said, "We've never looked at it like that before."

Brad answered, "It can be complicated but think about it. If it's stuff you buy and sell, then the difference is what

you make. If it is stuff you make and sell, then you need to know how much did it cost you to make it and then do the same.” Brad saw the confusion and tried to describe it differently.

“Look you have got 10 different things going on. Some we need no matter what they cost, like the stage line account, post office and telegraph station. That puts us on the map. To keep that you need to have the ability to change horses and feed people. We need as many customers as we can get so we have a general store, restaurant, and bar. That makes us what we are. There are some logical add-ons, like butchery/meat market. It makes sense to prepare your own meat for the restaurant especially if others could use the service as well. Let’s look at this a different way. Of all the things you do what do you like the best.”

Sarah quickly said, “I like the restaurant, bar and store. I like managing the garden but not actually working it. The same with making sauces and putting up vegetables.”

Brad came back with, “OK that’s perfect. It sounds like you need one full time person like Alma to help you with everyday cooking and extra people for planting and harvesting. How about you Foster? What do you like doing and what don’t you like? What do you think makes the most money?”

Foster then offered, “I like building things. I really like selling the water system. I know more new things are coming our way and it will be fun and profitable to sell those too. People made money on their first crop or season. They want to improve their properties. I know the best way for them to do that. They are all going to want inside plumbing. They are all going to want insulation. They are all going to want new windows and doors. And I imagine they are all going to want new tools or devices that will be gasoline generated. I don’t know that I can, but if I could, I would get rid of grainery, livery and forge. All the product is heavy in everything except profit. I’d probably next give up the butcher operation, but it is so tied to the restaurant and store that I can’t shake it loose. Refrigeration demonstrated in our meat and restaurant business will create bunches of customers for the construction side. Can I tell you what I really need?”

Brad came back, “Shoot.”

I need a savvy on site partner. I can get all the ranch hands and construction guys I need, good ones too. But there’s a lot of bidding, selling, scheduling, performing and then collecting that needs to be done. This requires special persons with special skills. Sarah and I have it and I think I have another one or two we can teach it to, but we need a guy like you Brad. Sarah and I end almost every day doing the book. We then schedule the next day and week. I knew I was going to work hard when I came out here, but I thought I’d be growing hay and pushing cows. I never thought I’d be managing 5 or 6 businesses. I’m not complaining, and the money is coming in good. I could use some help at the top. Come on Brad, bring your family out to the prairie.”

Brad paused, sighed and shrugged his shoulders before he said, “Give me one more year. There are some huge things happening in my business with gas driven engines. I need to get you, or us, right in the middle of that so we can let loose of the granary, livery and forge as we pick up Farm equipment sales and rentals. We also pick up gasoline sales and car and equipment maintenance and repair. You are going to have a couple more neat products to sell. Let’s not make any other big changes this year. Get your refrigeration in and one more section of stores build. I agree you need a bunk house so you and your family have a proper home. Keep looking for talent. You are going to need to promote a couple guys. Start with someone to take over granary, livery and forge. Sarah, I know you like Alma but she’s young. Do you think she could lead a team of 3 or 4 women with the garden?”

Sarah answered, “Yes, especially if I could give her a raise to man’s wages. I’ve seen her with her family. She knows how to tell people what to do and she certainly understands what needs to be done.”

Foster then said, "ok Brad you need another year. Can you at least come out and show off your new baby?"

"We can do that. We'll do it in spring so I can show you the new products were putting together."

Sarah said, "I want to see that baby"

Foster then said, "Don't worry darling you will see the new baby. I think these two families are linked for a long time to come."

Brad gave a piece of paper with lots of names and addresses on it. He suggested that Foster pay a call on each to see if there was a fit for selling their wares.

Foster paid a visit on each of the names on Brad's list. He was looking for product that he thought his customers would want. He needed to understand price and quality as it related to a competitive product. He then needed to know terms and who pays the shipping. He found another stove guy who offered to supply one display model to sell from. Foster made sure he knew he would be burning the stove in the store to best show its utility. The manufacturer agreed.

Sarah came along on a couple appointments while Cynthia watched the children. Sarah knew fabric, clothes, shoes, accessories and all the rest. Foster kept thinking about the rugged existence of the prairie folks, but Sarah was quick to remind him that women still like to be thought of as women. Foster wasn't going to disagree. She proved right later, with additional orders being generated based on demand.

It was time to head home. Both Sarah and Foster would miss Brad and Cynthia, but it was time to get back to work. At the end of the long train ride Stan was waiting to pick them up. It was another three hours by wagon to reach home. Before they could proceed, they needed to load six large boxes with product for the store. Once loaded they traveled on. They both wondered about when it would be a train ride right up to their home. We'll see.

When they got home Alma had a hot dinner ready and waiting. They looked around and saw what was accomplished in the months that they were gone. The bar was finished and varnished, it looked great. There was a new table and six chairs in the center of the room. Everything was insulated. In the restaurant the insulation was covered over with painted sheeting. In the store the insulation was exposed.

After dinner and some conversation Stan took Foster out to the new insulated room. This 24 x 24 room was double insulated. There was a wall down the center that divided the room for cool and freeze. The compressor was in place but had never been tried. The new gas tank was installed over next to the kerosene. There was no need for refrigeration in this, the end of winter other than just trying it out to see if it worked. Foster decided to wait a while.

CHAPTER 20 I LOVE YOU, CHICKEN WINGS - RANGE WAR, SHOOT OUT

Ed goes back into current conversational mode with "OK, we're reaching a point where I should stop. I'm about ready to set up the characters for the next major chapter or section of the book. This section will tell the story of my Grandfather Jeremy."

Everyone's head turned in the direction of the pass-through window between the bar and kitchen to the sound of Harry saying, "We're not tired, keep going." The five at the bar started laughing. It appears that Harry, Karen and Jason heard the story telling going on in the bar so they grabbed chairs and sat quietly listening.

Ed began. "Guys, I'm actually getting pretty tired. How about this? We are going to be busy tomorrow, but I think it will be an early crowd. Let's rest up and then we'll have a long session tomorrow night. I think you're going to like my grandfather. OK?"

Everyone chatted in with positive responses. Folks went about their business making sure they were ready for a healthy start with the football folks. Gene Leslie and Ed remained at the bar. Gene said, "Well it was a couple months ago when you envisioned a "grand Opening". Did these last couple days measure up to what you were hoping for?"

Ed sardonically laughed and then said, "Well, I don't see how we could have handled more business than we did. I think for the most part we took good care of our customers. I think a bunch are coming back as regulars."

"I agree," Leslie Said.

Gene said, "The way football is set up we've got games running all day all the way up to Sunday Night Football. I know it is preseason, but I think we are going to get some action. For next week I think I'm going to get two more TVs."

Ed said, "Let's see how tomorrow works out. I think you might be right on the TVs. Are you ok with all the bookwork? After the rush let me get with Larry, Henry's computer guy and figure out the easiest way to do the books. I know it's in there. I just never learned it before. But I'll figure it out and then teach you while we casually run a business that isn't in Grand Opening mode."

Gene said, "you know grand opening or not we are going to be busy."

Ed said, "Yeah, that's the good news. OK. I'm laying my sword down for the evening. I'll see you in the morning."

Ed and Leslie left to go home. While in the car Leslie brought up how cute Gene was about wanting to pay her for what she was doing.

Ed paused for a second and then said, "Well he has a problem figuring out how to compensate you because he knows that I have fallen in love with you."

Fortunately, they were at a stop light when that one came out. Leslie put the car in park. She turned and said, "You have no idea how happy that makes me. I love you too. We don't have to do a moon land rush or anything, do we?"

"No, we just need to love each other. That is so easy for me to do."

The next morning Leslie dropped Ed off at the Bucket. Gene, Donnie, Dorothy and Karen were already on site. Dorothy was working on the computer while everyone else was preparing their stations for the doors to open. Dorothy looked up from across the room and said, "Hey Ed, Check this out"

The TV screen lit up with a graphic of St. Louis vs. Dallas shown to you at the Shiny Bucket. She had both team helmet logos and the picture of the restaurant at the bottom. She had made a file of each team logo and could click and place any team she wanted into a file like this. So out of site. Everybody was amazed.

Finally, Ed said, "You're amazing girl. Do you have a second?"

Dorothy said, "For you, sure."

Ed pulled out his notebook and started going over some sketches he had drawn. Both were nodding and smiling.

Gene came over to Ed and said "do you believe the stuff she can do? Kids, education, I guess there is hope out there."

Ed said quietly to Gene, "OK, I told her I love her."

Gene immediately clapped the palms of his hands together and said "YES!"

Karen could see Ed, Gene and Donnie in one group, so she came over to talk to the three of them. She said, "Can I make a suggestion?"

"Certainly. What have you got?"

She continued, "How much of a pain in the butt is it to make chicken wings? I had tons of requests yesterday."

Just then Harry was walking in. He heard the request and before anyone else could answer he said, "I can make wings. I think we should make the authentic Buffalo wings. We should make them in their own deep fryer. I know the sauce and how to get three levels of hot. How about we tell the customers we will have wings next week. I'll cost everything out and see what others are charging. With that I'll recommend a price."

Gene said "Beautiful." Then looking at Ed said, "Look a problem/opportunity surfaced from one of our gifted staff and was responded to by one of our other gifted staff who had a solution. We didn't need to get our two cents in there. That's a thing of beauty."

They all laughed. The first game came on at 11:00. The Kansa City game came on at 1:30. The bar was full at 11:00. The football action went pretty much like yesterday with the college games. The difference was that the Sunday lunch/dinner crowd landed early and kept coming.

Everything was moving along smartly when at the height of the rush a customer presented himself to the desk and said "Adams, party of 4."

Leslie was at the desk and said, "It will be about 20 minutes sir."

"I don't think so, I want the next available table."

Leslie continued, "Sir, others have been waiting. Why don't you go to the bar and have a drink and before you know it your table will be ready."

"Let me speak to your manager."

Leslie called Ed out and explained that this gentleman wanted the next available table and didn't want to wait his turn that should be about 20 minutes.

Ed thought, oh boy here we go. "Can I help you sir?"

"Do you know who I am?"

Ed answered, "Yes sir, you are the Adams party of 4."

The man continued, "I am your county Legislator. I am a busy man and I want that table over there."

The table was now fully bussed and ready for seating. Ed looked down at his waiting list and called out for the Miller party of 4. Legislator Adams went around the bend. "How dare you seat that table right in front of me. You could have ended this problem quickly and quietly and given me that table."

Ed said, "Yeah, I could have but I chose not to. The Millers had been waiting 15 minutes more than you. The good news is that two tables just got up to leave so your table will be ready as soon as it is cleared."

Adams was seething. Ed looked at Leslie and said "make sure Karen gets this guy. Warn her. Give good service but don't take any shit."

Leslie said, "Got it."

Everything went well during the ordering process, but we hit a bump in the road when the Caesar salad arrived. Adams snapped his fingers at Karen which is a summoning gesture that pisses everyone off in the service community. Karen went to the table and said "Yes sir"

"There are no anchovies in my salad."

Karen responded, "I know sir we don't put anchovies in our Caesar salad."

"Well bring me some anchovies and I'll put them in myself. I thought this was going to be more than a pizza joint. I guess I was wrong."

Karen then sweetly responded, "Oh yes sir we are a sports bar too."

Adams couldn't believe she sassied him. He went nuts. He started calling her names and telling her she was the worst server he'd ever had etc. etc. Ed saw what was going on and quickly walked over. He looked at Karen and said, "You're fine. Go pack up this order to go." He then looked at Adams and said, "You think you are so important that you can attempt to make a scene in my restaurant by harassing a young woman." Just then Karen showed up with the to go packages. Ed then continued, "The meal is on me, but you will be eating it elsewhere."

With that Adams almost had a coronary. His wife and the other couple were embarrassed for Adams' behavior. Obviously, they had seen it before. They got up signaling Adams to do likewise.

Adams kept finger pointing yelling I'm going to the owner to complain. A few chuckles went over the room because most knew that Ed was the owner. Finally, as Adams got to the doorway a soft level of applause rose in the dining room. Nobody likes a jerk pushing people around.

Everything else in the evening pretty much fell in place. Deliveries were rocking all day. People were catching on to the fact that you can order pastas to go also. It's not just pizza. Ed thought to himself when we go out with the delivery flyer, we should include a pasta special. That's for later on.

Everything pretty well died just after 9:00. The underground network spread the word that there might be some story telling when all is cleaned up and ready for tomorrow. Ed and Leslie could see people humping to make sure they were done on time. It was funny.

Gene had pitchers of beer set up on a couple tables across from the bar stool where Ed would be talking. Some friendly chatter was going on when Ed knew it was time to begin.

Ed began "First, this is on the clock time. You've been working hard enough to sit and listen while being paid. Before I start with the actual story, I need to explain some things. It might seem confusing at first but I think you'll get it. A section is a block of land that is one mile by one mile that makes up 640 acres."

With that all the TVs showed a box marked a mile on either side. Everybody freaked. My God he has training aids.

"A quarter section is one half mile by one half mile and measures 160 acres."

With that the section was displayed cut into quarters. "The land rush that took place here was 30 sections or 120 quarter sections laid out 40 wide and three deep." The next slide popped up.

"There was also government land on either side of these 120 homesteads and one piece that was also a section wide that ran through the middle of it all. My family parcel was adjacent to that government piece most identifiable for having this huge rock sitting on it. For you newcomers check with some others to hear the story of how we ended up on that site.

"Anyway, a quarter section has about 2,600 feet of frontage on all sides. So, you know where the train station is. Next to it is my brother's restaurant that began the family spread. If you keep moving this way 2,600 feet you will see the beginning of the second site my great grandfather picked up. That spot is best identified as Peach Street. Come another 2,600 feet and you get to Plumb Street that ends my family holdings. The depth for all of it is 2,600 feet also. Now if you come down three more sites you will come to what used to be the Martinez site. Your Shiny Bucket is right in the middle of that site."

You could hear some low conversation as people started to understand the geography. Ed began again. "So, in the first 3 to 5 years Foster kept building facilities to house the businesses he was creating. Sarah's cousin Cynthia and her husband kept Foster on the cutting edge of technology with products that were coming to market with the use of gasoline combustion engines. Foster knew how important it was to get a rail station next to his property. He had played it smart by getting the post office, stage line rest stop and telegraph station. With those services in place, it became easier to get the train station.

Meanwhile that railroad or government land was important for other reasons. Everyone was allowed to graze on it, and it became the cattle trail for driving the herds to the stock yards. When the contract was awarded Foster and Sarah were thrilled. They felt that whatever came along they could always make a living off serving train travelers.

By the fourth and fifth summer, improvements were coming along at a constant pace. One building Foster build was just to rent out. One person was skilled in many areas. He was a barber, dentist and undertaker. Other tenants followed.

One was a store that specialized in horse tac.

Sarah's garden kept growing. She added berries. She also moved to the end of the site and planted fruit trees. Her orchard had six each apples, peaches, pears and plums. It was going to take a few years for them to bear fruit

but they would get there. Each year she added more trees to the orchard. In the same area she started a beehive for honey. Foster was always willing to help with whatever Sarah wanted but he didn't do bees.

More people kept moving into the valley and they all needed to eat. The restaurant, store and bar were always busy. The compressor and cold rooms changed a lot. Part of the package that Brad had sent along were containers the size of ice blocks. You filled them with water about 6 at a time. You waited a day and then emptied them and filled them with water again. It didn't take long to build a mound of ice blocks ready for sale. They soon needed more to build a bigger mound. Serving cold beer in the summer was a huge hit. Some people wanted some ice in their whiskey. Just about everybody wanted a cooler to store ice at home. The cooler they were selling was the exact right shape to store the ice that was being made. It was easier to buy the cooler than try to build one to fit exactly. Some folks got industrious and built small rooms not unlike Foster's but about ¼ the size. They bought multiple blocks of ice and were able to keep their product cool for a couple weeks before they came to buy more ice.

Each year more and more products were being added to the store inventory. Lots of niceties for the ladies were added. Lots of kitchen things for easier cooking were added also. They now had three different kinds of whiskey. In the fourth year Foster found a furniture manufacturer that made a good product for a good price. Foster made a deal to buy some samples as long as the manufacturer would supply an equal amount of other samples. Foster would then take orders to sell the product.

Brad and Cynthia finally moved out in the fourth summer. Foster already had their house framed in. Initially they would stay with Foster and Sarah as they completed their home to their liking. Everyone was thrilled to be together. By now Sarah was pregnant with her third and Cynthia with her second.

Sarah had hired Alma full time to help with cooking, the restaurant and the garden. She understood how to hire and manage people in to doing what was necessary. She liked working the bar and restaurant. She liked managing others into the development of the garden. Each year it kept getting larger. Each year her ladies would put up more vegetables and sauces. This year the first of the fruit crop has come in. It was going to be exciting to put up fruits. Sarah also kept an eye on what the store bought for resale. As more and more people had more spare money, she knew it was time to offer more niceties.

Meanwhile Foster kept selling equipment, tools and lumber. His construction crew was busy all the time. Over 90% of the homes in the valley had indoor plumbing. By now almost everyone came to the store to buy lighting oil and ice. While at the store they would check out everything that was offered.

By the time Brad and Cynthia had moved in, the valley had a new face of ownership. There were about five big players with 5 to 10 sites each. There were a couple like Foster that had two and a bunch that had one. Some of the big boys had sharecroppers taking care of 30 to 50 acres each. The town was growing up around the train station. Foster had built three buildings that could each be occupied by four families. They each had inside plumbing. Families would rent the home and work either as ranch hands or construction folks like Foster hired.

As families failed, they would leave their spread carrying what they could. Frequently furniture and beds were too big to move so they sold them to Foster at a good price. Foster displayed all at one end of the general store.

Foster could tell that Brad was a hard worker but used to working a desk. Out here you needed some sweat and strength in your effort. After completing his house with the help of others Brad moved into taking over the books and selling and bidding jobs. He also kept searching for new product to be offered. As gas fired farm vehicles hit the market Brad made sure he had one of each to sell from. This equipment was expensive. Everyone saw what it

could do and loved it. The problem was the price. Brad was able to figure out how many days a man would need the equipment for the acreage he was tending. He then suggested that ranchers or farmers partnered up to split the cost yet still get enough time to do what needed to get done. He then offered a new idea. Why not rent the equipment by the week. It certainly wasn't as good owning it, but you could still take advantage of the technology at a cost you could handle. Maybe next year you can buy. Another opportunity that Brad suggested took form.

They donated two acres to be used to create a church, school and government offices. There was no need for government offices yet, but you knew that was coming. Everyone agreed they needed a church and school now. Brad and Foster both saw the benefit of having these functions right in the middle of their land. They always said you need to do anything that keeps bringing people to your stores. They set up a meeting for all interested parties to come and talk about this new idea.

The meeting was set about ten days out to be held at the Foster's bar. About 40 people came. Foster began. "I think we need a school and a church now and in the future, we will probably need some government office as well. I am willing to donate this plot of land. I think in the beginning one building can be both the church and the school. I am also willing to pour a foundation for a 24 x 32 building. Is there anyone else willing to help out with the construction of the rest?"

Much to his surprise many hands went up in the room. Harrison and Clyde both said they would buy the lumber. Nate offered to help with the building. Others agreed. Lots of people were offering to help. Sarah was writing down all the names. Finally, Brad said, "It's nice to have a school but then we need to find a teacher. Same with the church, we will need a preacher. We can probably pay the preacher from the collection basket, but we are going to have to pay a teacher. Does anybody know how much that is?"

All faces went blank. "Well, whatever it is we are going to need it. We can't get a teacher until we have a school room so I think we should begin the construction. Kansas City has a college. Maybe we should write them to see if teachers are available and at what price."

Della, Clyde's wife said, "I can write that letter in fact I'll write a couple letters and send them to the other schools as well."

Foster said, "We've got a plan. I'll stake off the site and mark the first building on it. Then I'll measure off, scrape the dirt and put in the foundation. I can bid out the lumber and other components needed. Once you go over that we can order and build. Everybody in agreement?"

Lots of yeah came from the crowd. Finally, Foster interrupted "You know this worked out pretty well. I think issues like this for our common good will come up again. I think we should have a meeting like this, every three months. We don't know what the issues will be, but my guess is there will be some. Maybe we need this, every two months. How about if we schedule a meeting for two months from today. In the meantime, think about issues that might need our attention."

You could tell that Ed had come back to current mode when he asked, "What do you think that moment was?"

First a pause but then Karen spoke up, "The beginning of local government."

Ed answered, "Right you are, the beginning of Government for what would be the Town of Big Rock."

Ed could tell that the audience was definitely into the story, so he pressed on. "It is going to be easier for me to explain the next ring of characters. Some you have met and some you haven't yet. Let's start with Harrison who

you know and his wife Linda.

With that Dorothy hits a key and Harrison's land is highlighted. Everybody goes "Ah" like there was a fireworks display. Back to Ed.

"They have one daughter Lucy. Over the first 15 years they have added 9 additional sites to their property making a sizeable spread. They were strictly ranchers growing only the crop they needed to feed themselves and their livestock. Their property was all around Foster's.

In the fourth year Linda was having a baby when unfortunately, both died in childbirth. Harrison was devastated. He is now raising a three-year-old girl along with all the other problems of developing his spread. Two of his brothers came out with their families. With Harrison's land expansion there was enough work and opportunity for all but what it really gave was a sense of family for Harrison and Lucy.

The next major player in the valley was Clyde. He became a big landowner over this period of time amassing over 12 sites all to the North of Foster's."

Another click and Clyde's holding are highlighted. This time the reaction from the crowd was less audible.

"He was another hard-working ol' boy with a near white beard and hair that looked like it was due for a cutting.. He was another rancher. He had a wife Della and a son Jr. These were all hard-working prairie folks. Success has come to them all, affording them the means to have some creature comforts their parents could never have assembled. Della started a bit of a belly that showed her success.

"A sheep herder becomes the next character to describe. His name is Nate. He has a wife Rachel and a daughter Elenor. He is originally from Germany. He immigrated to America 20 years ago and settled in Indiana. He came west with the land rush like everyone else and secured the site just behind Harrison's site that is just behind Foster's." Again, the site became highlighted.

"The sheep herder family were nice people in spite of what Harrison kept bitching about. Rachel and Eleanor were happier back east but knew that Nate needed more land to develop his farm. Nate had been raising sheep since he was a boy in Germany. The ladies knew that things would get better as more people arrived in the valley. Now it was pretty lonely. So many people didn't like them because they raised sheep. The two years when Elenore was 14 and 15 she traveled back to Indiana for the winters. She was working with a veterinarian to learn how to take care of animals. She worked hard and studied hard. She was easy on the eyes with light brown long hair and became the object of attention for many of the young men in the valley.

One of the other big players in the valley were the Jensions, Robert, Marian and their son Junior. The Jenson's were farmers. They had a garden like everyone else for their own needs but the balance of their property was devoted to raising a cash crop. Over time they have grown many different crops. This year it was corn."

Ed looked up again to explain what and why he was describing these characters. "There were many different families in the valley. There were a couple things that brought them all together, one of which was school. The one room schoolhouse opened 12 years earlier with a schoolteacher who taught all grades. Many families didn't send their kids to school the first year. They wanted to check it out before they committed. By the time the school was in existence three years there were over 40 students. The Town Fathers financed an expansion allowing for three rooms and one more teacher. Getting kids back and forth to school created a thing that should have been called "wagon pooling". As anticipated in the beginning this increased the number of people stopping by the store.

The other thing that brought them all together was an event that developed called the Town Social. The first Saturday of every month that wasn't winter Foster and family would host a party. People brought food to share. There were some men who knew how to play guitar and fiddle, so music and dancing became a big part of the evening. Folks just got an opportunity to mingle and talk. There was some drinking goin on.

Hardship also brings people together. Around the fifth year there was a tornado that came through the valley. It destroyed three houses, 4 barns and a couple out buildings. The balance of that fall was devoted to helping those affected families. Many of you have seen movies where the Amish have a barn raising. It was quite like that. Owners, workers, and ranchers alike pitched in to build new homes and barns one day of every weekend through that fall.

Now we are well into a new century. Times are pretty good. The kids are growing. All first-generation prairie kids learned how to work. There was a sense of pride among the young when they earned the right to take on a more complicated task. You might start out feeding chickens and pigs, but soon you might know how to mend a fence, milk a cow or churn butter.

Young Jeremy had the advantage of having an older brother and younger sister. Next door at Cynthia and Brad's were two more kids Jeremy's age. The sheepherder family had a girl named Elenor. Harrison's daughter, Lucy grew up next door, only a half mile away. These kids were all close by prairie standards. Jeremy also met all the kids at school and one more opportunity to gather came almost every day when the families came to the store. All kids wanted to accompany all parents on trips to the store.

The other thing that was unique to Jeremy growing up was the wide array of chores. Most kids grew up on either a ranching house or a farm. Their chores usually focus on one of those businesses. Jeremy had work opportunities at farming, ranching, restaurant work, kitchen work, store work and even learning Morris code to work the telegraph.

Everybody still remembers the day the first automobile drove up to Big Rock. There was enough gas in our tank that was used for compressors and tools to be able to sell three gallons to this passerby. The first gas sale. As predicted changes kept happening.

"This is all nice stuff, let's get into the crisis of the time. Sheep and cattle."

You could tell Ed was going back into story mode. Della and Clyde enter the store, Della says "Hi Foster. How are you doing?"

"Pretty well Della. What can I help you with?"

Della hands over a piece of paper and says, "Here's my provision list. What have you got new since last week?"

Just then Sarah enters, greets everyone, and then says to Della, "" Well, I've got some new bolts of fabric and some kitchen stuff, bowls plates and the like over on that counter."

Foster then says, "Clyde, I've got some new tools and some really fancy knives. They came all the way from Boston."

Clyde responds almost angrily, "What have you got gonna' help me catch them rustlers?"

Foster says, "I might have something. It's a little pricey but I've got some binoculars. Let's you see up close even when it's far away."

Clyde answers, "That's my problem, I don't see nothing. Every time I count stock, I'm short. It's either them damn injuns or that dirty sheep herder."

Foster responds, "Well I know the Vogels, the herder family, that you are talking about and they sure don't look like the rustlin' type."

Clyde almost spit back, "You stickin' up for that scum that's killing this land?"

Della broke in with, "Now dear be nice."

Clyde again, "Nice hell, those flea-bitten sheep are killing this valley."

Foster then adds, "Clyde, all I know is when they come in here, they are nice polite folk. They pay their bill on time too."

Clyde says again with anger, "Foster we've been supporting this store of yours all the way back to where you had nothing much to sell. Now you are selling to the people that are killing this land. This is cow country, no room for sheep."

Foster then says, "You know I don't get away from here too often but it sure looks like there's an awful lot of government land out there. You telling me there ain't enough to go around."

Clyde says, "Hey if he was another rancher, we could fit him into the status quo."

Della laughs and says, "Listen to him status quo."

Clyde keeps going back to his same argument, "Sheep are different. Cows eat the grass off the top and it grows back. Sheep chew it all including the roots. It takes forever to grow back. They're a blight, a plague."

Foster, knowing he was stirring the fire said, "Maybe so but according to the law they've got as much right to the open range as you do."

"Well, that's a stupid law."

Della looked over at Foster and Sarah and said, "He'd be ok with the sheep people if he wasn't so upset about losing his cattle."

Just then Lucy came in with a big smile and hello for everybody. She asked Foster, "Hey did my new Winchester come in?"

Foster said, "Yeah and it's a beauty. I'll get it for you. How many guns you got girl?"

Lucy answered with a laugh, "You can't have too many guns."

Della asked Lucy, "Why don't you come over for supper on Sunday. I'm frying chicken. I know Jr. would love to see you."

Clyde added, "Yeah come on over Lucy, I'd like to have something good happen for a change." Lucy looks over at what is usually a happy man and asks, "What's got you down?"

Clyde continues with his tale of woe with "Them damn injuns or that sheep creep are rustlin' my cattle. I reported

it to Marshal Quinn. He's about as sharp as cow turds. He said he went and talked to both. They said they didn't do it. Well, you think they're gonna say "yeah I did it, arrest me". Dumb ass. He thinks it's a couple rustlers coming through the valley and movin' on. But if that was true, they'd be taking yours too. You lost any?"

"No."

Clyde says, "Yeah, see my end of the valley is next to that sheep creep and the Indian reservation. You got lucky being down further."

Lucy says "I'll tell my boys to keep an eye out for them"

"Thanks Lucy but come to dinner." He added.

Della said, "I'll have a real nice spread."

"MS Della you are a great cook, and you know I'm always good for a double helping of your fried chicken, but I don't want to take your delicious food under false pretenses."

Della says, "Now what do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. Both of you and my dad have been trying to match up Junior and me since I was 15 years old. Junior is a buddy of mine, but we don't think of each other the way you want."

Della says, "Now Lucy we never force you on each other."

"Right"

Della says, "Well maybe a little. We just keep hopin' if you two keep socializing a bit maybe something will spark."

Clyde throws in his two cents with, "We'll slow down a little, but you know Della, me, your Dad and even your mom, God bless her soul, have always hoped that you two kids would fall in love so that you could blend our spreads and become one of the most powerful ranches in the state."

Lucy responds, "Well that part sound good but Junior and I don't look at each other that way. Besides I think Junior has his sights elsewhere."

Clyde started coughing and then finally said through gasps of air, "Don't go telling me it's that sheep herders' kid. I can accept a lot. Hell, I'd almost rather see him marry an Injun."

Della said with a bad grin, "Now Clyde, watch your mouth."

Clyde continued with, "Jeez, I've got rustlers, sheep herders and now a sheep herder's daughter driving me nuts. It's more than a man can take."

Foster found a way to change the subject. "Hey Clyde, your new branding iron came in just as ordered."

On the pass-through Lucy took a look at it and said "I've never understood the "Lazy C" thing. There's nothing about you that's lazy."

"Well as soon as Junior can take over the reins, you'll see me get lazy quick."

Della said, "I doubt that."

Lucy said, "Me too, our brand is a simple circle. Coming around and going around."

Foster looked out the window and then said, "Oh boy. Now Clyde, I want you to be a gentleman. Nate and his family are coming in the store. You control yourself."

As Nate and his family entered all said hello with the exception of Clyde. Nate asked Foster, "Did my order come in?"

Foster added, "Sure did, yours too Miss Elenore."

Lucy asked Elenor, "Order some fancy dresses?"

Elenor answered, "That would be nice but no. I got some new sheers and some medical supplies."

Rachel said, "Back in Indiana Elenore trained with a veterinarian. She sheers our sheep which is a big job and she also takes care of the sick ones."

Lucy said, "I thought you just read books and did needlepoint and stuff like that."

Nate volunteered, "I wish that was the case but no she works hard. You can't make it as a herdsman on just selling meat. You need to get the wool. It's hard work but it pays off."

Rachel added, "I wish we could have stayed in Indiana a little longer..."

Clyde pipes in with a "Me too".

Rachel wasn't backing down so she finished her sentence with "...so she could finish her studies. It's valuable to know how to take care of animals."

Lucy Jumped in with "So what do you know how to do?"

Elenore answered "Just simple things. I help with all the births, I clean and salve all the cuts and bruises they pick up. With these supplies I can make a couple potions. One is for cleaning out their stomach if they get into some bad grass. Sometimes we get lambs that just won't eat enough. This other potion increases their appetite."

Lucy asked, "Could you work on cattle?"

"I'm not a vet."

Lucy said, "I know that, but you know a bunch more than I know."

Elenore said, "Well the simple stuff that I know should work on cattle."

Lucy said, "Our closest vet is over 100 miles from here. I'm lucky if I see him 3 times a year. If I had a problem, would you mind taking a look?"

"Sure, we're neighbors."

Clyde was obviously uncomfortable with Lucy making friends, even getting help from a sheep person. Finally, he says, "She doesn't know anything about cattle, She only works on fuzzy animals."

Della snapped, "Now Clyde you apologize. You know better not to put somebody down because they know

something. She didn't come here braggin', Lucy asked. She not only has a skill she is willing to share it with a neighbor. And I might add she is willing to share it with cattle people, that so far haven't been acting too neighborly towards her or her family."

Foster again trying to change the subject asked Nate, "Can you bring your wagon around to load. This is a bigger load than last time."

Nate answered, "Yeah the flock is growing."

Clyde who doesn't know when to quit says, "You got any cows you're feeding over there.?"

Nate responds, "No sir, as I told the Marshal I will tell you I don't have any of your cows."

Clyde says, "Well someone does."

Finally, Rachel says, "We don't steel. We never have and never will. I am sorry for your loss. I have told our people to keep an eye out but sir...we are getting tired of your accusations."

Della speaks up, "Rachel, This Sunday I am cooking a mess of fried chicken for supper."

Clyde and Nate could both see where this was going and tried to gesture their wives off this idea.

Della continued, I would be honored if you and your family could come over about 1:00 and enjoy a meal with us."

Rachel answered, "I would be honored but only if you let me to bring a lamb stew and some fresh baked bread."

Nate said shaking his head, "I've got to load the wagon."

Clyde muttered, "I'm going to the bar for a drink."

Even Lucy got in the act. "If that invitation is still open to me, I will be there. I wouldn't miss this meal for the world."

When Clyde got to the bar he found Junior and Harrison. Junior said "Hi dad"

Sarah was tending bar. Clyde says, "Give me a drink. Make it a double I really need a drink."

Junior asks, "What's the problem dad?"

Clyde answers between gulps, "Your mother is throwing dry kindling on my fire."

"What did she do?"

Clyde finished his drink and while motioning for another said, "It ain't like I don't have enough problems with rustlers and sheep herders now I've got the sheep herder's daughter to worry about."

Junior asked, "What did Elenor do?"

Clyde says, "See there. It's bad enough that my only son likes these low life sheep herders but now my wife is inviting them over for Sunday supper."

Harrison then asks, "Really, how did that happen?"

Just then Lucy came in laughing. She says, "Give me a shot Foster."

Foster asks, "Are you sure, as a lady, you are ready for afternoon drinking?"

Lucy quickly says, "Just get me my drink. I've been raised like a man. I can work, ride, shoot and fight like a man too. So, get me that drink."

Foster pours. Just then Jeremy shows up from a morning job. Jeremy asks, "What's going on? Lots of people here for this time of day."

Foster leans over to his son and says, "Just listen."

Harrison says, "So Clyde, how did you end up inviting the herders over for dinner?"

Lucy says, "It was great dad."

Clyde says, "Yeah it was just great. That Della of mine doesn't know when to shut up."

Lucy says, "You were the one that put your foot in your mouth. The herder family came in and Elenor asked for her order. I was kind of jokin' on her asking if her order was pretty dresses, but it was medical supplies. She took training from a vet back in Indiana and takes care of all their animals. She helps with the births, fixes wounds and makes some potions for when they are sick or not eating enough."

Harrison says, "She knows how to do that?"

Lucy adds, "When I asked her if she would help me when I got a problem and can't get my vet, she said sure, 'It's the neighborly thing to do'."

Junior spoke up with, "See, I told you they were good people."

Clyde says, every time louder than the last, "They are sheep herders. Don't you understand. SHEEP."

Lucy keeps poking the fire with, "Clyde tried to put Elenore down by saying she only knows how to work on fuzzy animals."

"Oh Dad."

Lucy could barely control herself as she continued the story with, "Then Della went off on your father for being rotten to someone that has a skill and is willing to share it because it is a neighborly thing to do. Then she adds that we cattle people certainly haven't been neighborly towards them."

Harrison asked, "Clyde, what did you do then?"

Lucy jumped in with, "He accused the whole family of stealing his cattle."

Clyde said, "I didn't do that...then."

Lucy said "That's right, you did it earlier, but you still did it. Oh, and that Rachel, she's tough too. She told your dad in no uncertain terms that they don't steal, never have and never will. She looked your dad dead in the eyes and said she was tired of being accused. In the middle of it all your mom asked them over for Sunday dinner. The women over there did great. The men not so well."

Clyde was still mad. He looked at Lucy and said, "Now wait a minute. You might want to be treated like a man and for some reason I'm alright with that. But you are still young, and I expect the same level of respect from you as Junior gives your dad."

Lucy said, "You are right, and I am sorry. It was just so much fun to watch."

Just then Nate comes walking into the bar. Clyde looks at Sarah and said, "I thought this was a cattlemen's bar."

Sarah looked at Clyde and said, "no, this bar is open to the public."

Nate asked for a shot and then turned to Clyde and spoke. "Sir, we don't like each other, and I doubt if that is ever gonna change. And I am as unhappy as you are about having our kids hang out with each other."

Junior asked, "Can I ask why that is sir?"

Nate said, "I think people should hang with their own kind, especially people of the marrying age. I've stayed off of it, not because I don't care. I was afraid if I made a fuss, I would just be driving them closer together. When young people get serious with each other they need to take into account the families they come from."

Clyde looked up and said, "I can finally agree with you on something."

Junior wasn't going to let this one die. He said, "I certainly know my dad and by watching you and talking with Elenore I've learned a bit about you sir. You are both God-fearing, hard-working men. You both love your families. You are both proud and caring. You are both stubborn, near hardheaded. The only difference that I can see is that one works with cattle and one with sheep."

Clyde comes in with his favorite saying, "Those sheep are going to kill this valley. They eat the grass right down to the root..."

Harrison interrupts at this point "Actually Clyde I looked into this and it's not true. That's a story other cattlemen came up with to protect their lands. Sheep don't do any more harm than cattle on grazing land."

Junior says, "See dad, this valley is big enough for cattle and sheep and the families that raise them."

Nate says, "Junior, think as you will. Your dad and I are not destined to get along. Neither of us wants to live with angry women. So I'm coming to dinner this Sunday and as long as you don't accuse me again of stealing your cattle I will be polite. Maybe the women will get this out of their system and things can go back to normal."

Clyde shakes his head and says, "I understand, and I will behave, because if I don't I know my suppers for weeks are going to be cold or burnt, or both. See you Sunday."

Lucy looks to her dad and says, "We've got to go to this dinner. This is going to be more fun than huntin'."

The next day it was getting towards nightfall when Nate heard the bleating of one of his sheep. It sounded like she was caught in something. He rode out to see. He found the lamb tangled in some briars. A couple cuts with his knife and she was free and running towards home. As he was climbing up on his horse he could hear other noises coming from the darkness. He decided to investigate. Maybe it was the rustlers that Clyde has been complaining about.

He didn't know if this was going to be dangerous, so he took precautions not to be heard as he approached a

campfire with five people sitting around it. He stared in trying to let his eyes get accustomed to the darkness of the night and the brightness of the fire. He sat silently waiting to see what these guys were up to. They brought over a steer. It was being led to the far side of the fire. Nate could see it had the Lazy C brand. It belonged to Clyde.

Two of the cowhands dropped the beast to the ground while a third pulled a branding iron from the fire. Nate couldn't figure out what they were doing. The cow was already branded, why do it again? Then he saw it. When the cow got up the brand was a full circle. The proof of ownership of that cow just changed by completing the C into a Circle. The cow now belonged to Harrison. The same procedure went on for 6 more cows. Each of the cowhands had used their bandanas as masks. They weren't hiding, they were just keeping the smoke and smell of burning cow hide from their lungs. When the last cow was branded, they took off their masks. Oh my God It was Lucy running this show.

Nate couldn't wait to get to Clyde's place and tell him it was his best friend's daughter that was stealing his cattle. Clyde wasn't home so he told Della. She was shocked and promised to tell Clyde as soon as he arrived. Della apologized to Nate for all the false accusations that her husband had laid on him. This is good that the truth will come out.

As Nate said goodbye he got on his horse and started towards home. Della quickly grabbed her rifle and went to the barn to climb up on her horse. It was dark so Nate wasn't traveling too fast. Della took a short cut that Nate didn't know about. She got ahead of Nate onto the road running to town. She dismounted, took cover and with seven shots killed Nate the sheep herder. She rode back home, put away her horse, cleaned her gun and went to bed.

Clyde had had a few drinks at the meeting. He rode right by Nate's body and didn't notice it. Nate's horse found his way home. Rachel and Elenore were worried. They only had one other horse, so Rachel climbed up on Nate's horse while Elenore saddled up Brownie. On the trip towards the General Store, they found Nate's body. The two women wept in each other's arms trying to compose themselves. They covered Nate's face and continued to the store to get help.

Foster had just cleaned up from all the customers they had for the meeting. He thought to himself there sure was more drinking than meeting going on here. Then came a knock at the door. Rachel and Elenore explained what they had found. Foster first called out for Sarah to help. She was good at consoling. Foster went to the telegraph and signaled Marshal Quinn to come over immediately. He was available and began the 90-minute evening ride over here. Foster also got the undertaker to pick up the body before local vermin got at it.

Marshall Quinn interviewed everyone he could get a hold of. The next morning, he went out to where the killing had taken place. He then sent messengers out to ask some people to come to a meeting at noon today. By now the word was out why they were meeting. Different theories were being mentioned. Most people still thought injuns or marauders. They figured Nate had stumbled on to them rustling and they shot him to keep him quiet.

Everyone was gathered in the restaurant including Rachel and Elenore dressed in black.

The marshal began. There are two crimes going on here. First, we have rustling that has been going on for a couple months. Then we have the obvious killing of Nate Fogel. These crimes are connected but not the same perpetrator. Let's start with the rustling. Clyde has been complaining about it for months. We could not find any clues as to where these cows had gone. The reason is they didn't go anywhere.

All heads turned the marshal's way curious about what would follow. Early this morning I rode out to Harrison's place to interview Him and Lucy. While waiting I came upon a crew of cow hands. I began asking questions like I knew more than I did, trying to put some fear in them. When I said there was a murder involved and that anyone involved in the rustling could be charged in the murder and risk going to the gallows. All of a sudden, they became cooperative.

It appears that over the last 4 months about 10 cows per month were having their brand altered to look like the full circle as compared to the lazy c. It was really quite simple; the cows were all open ranging. When none of Clyde's people were around, they'd cook up a fire and change the brand on a dozen or so cows and let them out right to where they were before. One herd got bigger and one got smaller.

Clyde jumped up and said, "Harrison we've been friends for twenty years, how could you do this to me?"

The Marshall interrupted. "He didn't. Let me move on to the murder. It was no secret that Clyde hated Nate. Harrison was a bit more civilized about it, but he didn't care for sheep people either. So, without going any further they became the best suspects. The problem is when I checked the time that Nate's horse arrived home both were still drinking and meeting at the bar. So, it couldn't be them.

The next obvious suspect was Lucy. Yeah surprise, surprise, little Lucy over here is the one that has been rustlin' your cattle. Harrison looked at his daughter "Lucy it can't be you. Why would you do such a thing."

"Ask Della, she knows". Lucy said softly. Then she added "we both know that it is my destiny to take over these two ranches and more. I can build it into one of the most powerful ranches in the state. Della wanted me to do that by marrying Junior. She couldn't get it through her head that I didn't feel anything for Junior and never would. My plan was a simple one. Keep grabbing about 80 to 100 head a year. My ranch gets stronger, and Clyde's gets weaker. I figure in two years they would be disgusted and willing to sell out."

Junior said, "You think we would just go away. You didn't think we would eventually catch you at this scheme of yours. God that is arrogant. So it was Lucy that killed Nate to cover her crime."

Marshall Quinn then said, "Well it does appear to be obvious with the other two suspects out of the way that it should be Lucy. But there was one problem."

Clyde and Harrison in unison said, "What?"

"I went to the where Nate was shot. I found the place the shooter stood. There were seven shell casings. I then looked at Nate's body. The body was hit in the arm, leg, foot and chest. Three bullets missed altogether. Lucy is the best shot in the valley. If she had done the killing it would have been three shots in a tight circle to the head or heart. Three shots missing all together. Impossible."

All heads turned to Della. Finally, she said, "Yeah, yeah, I understand. But Lucy is right. We need to take control of this valley. She was just doing it wrong. You don't need to steal the cows just marry the rancher. All of it would work just fine, especially if we got rid of the herdsman and his daughter. She would learn to love Junior."

Junior said, "So you just kill this man. How did you do it?"

Della answered, "Well Nate came stomping up to tell Clyde that it was his best friend's daughter that was stealing his herd. I couldn't let that get out; it would ruin the plan. I knew I had two things to do. First, I told Nate that I would tell Clyde everything when he got home. When he left I followed him and shot him. Now the only thing I

had to do was make sure that Lucy didn't do anything stupid. It wasn't hard to convince her that my initial plan was still the best when the alternative was going to prison for rustling."

With that the Marshal loaded up Della as a murderer and Lucy as a cattle thief. Neither ever returned to the valley.

Ed stopped. After a pause Donnie was the first to break the silence. "Shit, that's a movie."

Now everybody started babbling. Karen then said, "That was so cool. Little things like planting an orchard where today is Peach Street and Plumb street. This was so cool."

Harry said, "I liked the ice thing. It is so hard to imagine living without ice. When you are totally used to it and then someone shows up with a way to keep your food fresh, wow."

Gene chimed in with, "Imagine, just change the brand. You didn't have to move the cattle or anything. Just change the brand. Amazing. That Lucy must have been a hellion."

Ed said "By all reports. Yes. She never made it back to the valley. Later on it was learned that she was gay. Nobody hardly knew what that meant then."

Leslie asked, "So the ladies went to jail?"

Ed answered, "Actually Della was hung a year later. First woman in the state. Lucy served 15 years in Leavenworth.

Leslie continued, "What about Clyde and Harrison and Junior., and the Fogel family."

Ed said, "It was just too much pressure with too many memories. Clyde and Junior sold off their land and moved to California. Harrison did likewise but he sold the one site behind Foster to Sarah to Foster at a real good price. The only ones to stay were the Fogels. They made a success out of their spread. In fact the next segment of the story deals with Elenore, Foster Jr. and Jeremy."

Donnie pumped in with "No, this isn't going to be a soap opera is it? The story is too good for that."

Ed said, "OK this would be a good place to stop, or I could give you one more chunk."

A chant came up from the crowd, "One more chunk, one more chunk"

Ed said, "You guys are brutal" He then continued, "The economy was doing well. More and more cars and trucks were around. Brad and Foster were selling lots of mechanized farm equipment. The construction side of the business was still brisk. Even the meat market/butchery was doing great. The upstairs of the store and restaurant was converted into hotel rooms. The bar and restaurant were converted to a look like you see in movies or pictures with a long bar with a big mirror behind it with a small stage that was used for entertainment every once in a while. They changed the name to Poli to honor the horse who was also an early settler.

They decided to finally build the family home and move out of the restaurant upstairs. They had lots of places to choose where to build but Sarah felt that their home should be where they started out in the beginning. So Foster

built a two story big country home with all the conveniences and a big rock in the back yard.

Jeremy had picked up the work ethic of his mom and dad. The job always started early and lasted almost until sundown. Initially he just did whatever Foster assigned at the morning breakfast. As time went on, he was able to request certain jobs. His choice was always part of the ranching part of the family business. Foster made sure that he learned all the different jobs including construction but frequently got his choice to work with the cattle. That was a wise decision as later he was running the whole ranching operation.

Jeremy thought back to when he was a young man. There were a group of young people that hung out together while growing up. Lucy was always the ringleader but Foster Jr., Paul, Clyde, and even Winona and Elenore would gather to have fun. The night before Foster went off to the war Lucy had grabbed a couple jars of moonshine and put together a going away party. Everybody got drunk. Foster and Jeremy made it home only because the horses knew the way. That was Jeremy's first hangover. He would remember how that felt for a long time.

Winona was a year younger than Jeremy and the same age as Elenore. At school she made friends with Elenore. Winona thought that she was so special. There she was with her Mom running that whole sheep business. The fact that her parents allowed her to go to school to learn how to take care of the animals was impressive. Winona tried to hang out with her as often as she could. She liked it best when she watched her treat one of the lambs. She had so much confidence for a teenage girl.

Winona said, "You know you and I are the smartest at school. I think it is going to be a curse for me. The boys don't even know when I am in the room. You're smart but you don't scare them away. I get that you are prettier and impress everybody with your vet skills."

Elenore quickly responds, "Hey, you're just as pretty as me. I'm not afraid of them. You seem to fade away when the boys arrive."

"Whenever I try to talk to them, I feel like I'm talking over their head. I know they feel that way."

Elenore said, "Well you are. They're just farmer boys that hate school. What do you expect? You need to tone down the school smarts. Don't worry it's not permanent. Smarter people are coming your way."

Elenore spoke about wishing that she had a couple more years back East before they came out. Their ranch back East was half the size as this one. The owner of the property was a veterinarian. He taught Elenore stuff all the time. There was a vet school in the next town. I so hoped to go there. I never even got the chance to ask to go. We came out here before I was old enough to attend. In the last three months before I left, I learned as much as I could from our landlord.

Winona was complaining about girls not having the opportunities that boys do. She was expected to grow up, get married and raise a family. She wanted so much more. Elenore asked her, "have you talked to your mom about this? She doesn't seem like that kind of woman. She certainly showed grit by becoming a pioneer."

Winona answered, "No, not really. But whenever chores were assigned, I always got the female kind. I just assumed she wanted me to grow up as a woman of the prairie."

Elenore said, "What would you like to do later in life?"

Winona sheepishly answered, "If it was at all possible, I'd love to be a doctor. I do good in school. I read better than all the boys. I'd love to go to college and learn to be a doctor."

Elenore said with encouragement, "Then go for it. First sit down with your mom and tell her what you would like to do. If you get her behind you none of the men will get in the way. She's a strong woman. Have you talked it over with our teacher?"

"Kind of. I said I wanted to go to college. She said I was smart enough to get in. Then she said it all mattered how much I wanted it."

Elenore agreed and told Winona to first meet with her mom. Winona agreed.

The family always had money. They would spend it on almost anything that improved the family business. They were a little frugal when it came to creature comforts. It was quite a surprise when Jeremy got a car for his 18th birthday. He loved that car.

Everything was going well but they knew they had to work to keep the animals alive and all the businesses working. Jeremy was now the oldest and had that much more responsibility handed to him. He unofficially became the business manager for everything at the age of 22. Brad and dad still called the shots on most decisions, but Jeremy made it all work. It was a huge responsibility.

So, with all that going on it was time for Winona to meet with her mom. She was terrified. The family was still getting through the loss of Foster Jr. and now she is bringing up this whole college thing. She knew mom wouldn't get mad, but she figured that she would just dismiss the idea as being foolish.

She started off by simply saying, "Mom, I want to go to college."

Sarah paused for a moment and then said, "Do you think you could get in?"

Winona said, "My teacher thinks so. I'm the smartest in my class. I read better than anyone else. I think the only thing getting in my way is that I'm a girl."

Sarah said "Well there are a few things that could get in the way like the cost of tuition. What do you want to be?"

"A doctor"

Sarah's eyes brightened as she said, "My daughter becoming a doctor. Wouldn't that be something."

"If the family could lend me the money to go, I would pay them back once I got a job."

Sarah again paused and then said, "I think you might be right about that female thing. If this was Jeremy asking, there would be no question that we would come up with the money to make it happen. Hmmm, let me think about this. I'll have to talk to your father. I might need a day to figure out just how I'm going to talk to him. You have my support. Let's see if the women of this family can muster a good enough argument to change old established ways. We'll talk in a couple days."

Winona gave her mom a big hug and said "I'm so happy you are behind me on this. Thank you."

Later on, Sarah met with Foster. She opened the conversation with, "Foster I have something to discuss with you and I don't want you to just say no without hearing all the reasons to say yes."

Foster knew he was in for something. "All right hit me in the eyes with it."

Sarah pronounced, "Our daughter wants to go to college. Even more than that she wants to be a doctor."

Foster took a breath, then paused a little longer before saying, "My God, what a blessing. She really wants to be a doctor. Our daughter would be a doctor. Wow. That's great news. Does she know how hard it is.?"

Sarah couldn't hold back her smile as she said, "She knows. She is the smartest student in school. She reads better than I do. She has the basics and more important she has the desire and will. I must confess that I thought you would be harder to sell on the idea."

"Hell no. I can't think of anything parents can do that is more important than opening the door of opportunity for their children. I hope she can make it through. It's hard. If I'd have known that you were prepared to sell me on the idea, I would have held out for something special."

"You always get your something special anyway" as she ogled the love of her life. "I think both of us should tell her. By the way she brought up the cost and offered to pay back the tuition money once she has a practice and is making money."

After supper as everyone was pushing away from the table Sarah asked Winona to stay for a while. The boys knew it was time to get out of there. With the three gathered at the heads of the table Foster sitting in the place of respect said, "So Winona, I hear you are thinking about going to college. You know that not only is that expensive it is also, let's say, unique in these times for women to be actively seeking a career away from the home or in our case the farm. When your mother pleaded your case, I made a huge error." He paused and looked into the eyes of his terrified daughter. "I said yes before I negotiated with your mom. I bet I could have had my favorite suppers for a month if I had held out. The problem was I couldn't because I was so proud of you."

Winona burst into tears. She hugged her mom, she hugged her dad as she began talking so fast with multiple thank yous and multiple I love yous, then she moved on to saying she was going to payback every dime it costs once she got working. That was when Foster spoke again. "As you know I am not much for frills, but I am always willing to spend money that helps our businesses, home and family. Your education is such an expenditure. Don't worry about paying it back. You just complete your education and make your folks prouder than they already are."

When they went to bed that night they started talking about the blessings of family along with the hardships. Foster kept saying "My daughter will be a doctor."

"Yes, we have been blessed. Our business are making money, and we love each other.

"And my daughter will be a doctor. And yes, I still love you" As he was talking he slid closer to his wife and began kissing her neck.

In 1917 the great world war began. That was before we learned to number them. Foster Junior went to his dad and said he wanted to enlist. Foster asked his son do you know why we are fighting this war? Foster Jr. didn't have a good answer. In fact, since then there hasn't been a good reason to fight that war. Junior said, "This is my country if it goes to war then I guess I am supposed to support their decision.

Foster asked, "Have you talked to your mom about this?"

"Yeah, she cried and asked me if I could reconsider. I said we've always been taught to stick up for more than ourselves. I felt it was my duty to go."

With that he enlisted, got his training, shipped over to France, and was killed in a trench near a town that had no name. Foster and Sarah were crushed. The first thing they did was to get Jeremy to promise that he would not enlist. That was fine with Jeremy. He had no intentions of going to war.

All the work went on, but a lot of the joy came out of it. For the longest time they set a place at the dinner table for Jr. One night a couple came to family dinner. The table setting changed, and the next night it went back without a setting for the first son.

Meanwhile, Brad and Cynthia's children were about the same age. Paul was totally interested in the construction business. Brad taught him how to bid jobs while Foster taught him construction skills. He had the gift for the business. He started going out on jobs with his dad when he was 15 years old. Initially he watched and helped with the simple chores at the job site. By the time he was 17 he could work alongside anyone and keep up if not set the pace. He, like Jeremy was paid a family wage which is less than the workers were getting. It didn't matter because they always had whatever they needed, and they knew they would be inheriting the business when the fathers decided to retire. Paul also got a car for his 18th birthday

Jeremy knew that mom and dad were starting to slow down a little. He knew that uncle Brad and Aunt Cindy were still working hard but a lot of the fun of it had drained away. Over the next 18 months Jeremy made sure he knew every job within the business. He spent hours with his family learning as much as he could. He picked up the simple tasks but also the big picture skills. Brad was always good at seeing what was coming. He tutored Jeremy well. Foster was a hardworking, detail oriented, planning kind of a guy. He shared his knowledge with his son.

Jeremy at the age of 22 with little formal education had amassed a ton of skills. The rest of the family was still in place, but Jeremy had been groomed to make decisions. Some decisions were simple like yes, we would be a gas station, and yes, we would know how to fix not only cars but farm equipment as well.

Other rumblings were happening in town. The question was do we want to have a mayor or council or just stay under County control. Other issues on the near horizon were the creation of a water district to deliver city water to all homes. Right after that was the concern about having a sewer district to remove all the waste that was being created daily.

Ed broke from story mode to talk to the audience. "This next section, on the surface isn't as exciting as rustling and murder but it was hugely important. Early development wasn't controlled much. People just built where they wanted to. Where to build was typically based on where the water was. If you are going to make a town you need more planning. If you are part of that planning process you can steer this development in your favor.

Back to story mode. Jeremy recognized that all of the businesses that they created would be better off if they were on the main street. There really wasn't a street yet. Because the store got so much traffic the pathway spread into a trail and then finally a road. Add to that, the traffic generated by the train station and a solid argument could be made that the property just in front of the first row of sites became the roadway running East and West. Similarly, the North South stripe of Government/railroad land looked like the obvious choice for a road.

Foster, Brad and Jeremy met to discuss the development of the whole area. Most folks weren't thinking that far ahead. Foster recommended that Brad should take a more active and visible position when the town fathers met. Typically, if you are the guy that shows up with ideas and the willingness to work them you become the leader without the need for an election or even a title. That's what Brad did. The family agenda was to get the street formally placed in front of their site. Next, they wanted the North South Road to go up the government piece making the restaurant, store and other developments right at what would be the prominent intersection forever.

Getting that done was easy.

Brad had seen how development moved in St. Louis and Kansas City. He knew that sewer and water services were coming in the next decade or so. It will come to a point that you won't be able to build unless you can tie into these services. Brad made the argument that it would be more efficient if these services and the land that they required follow the same path as the initial roads. Again, it made sense and there were no objections. What he had accomplished was making the family spread immediately accessible and hence immediately developable as soon as the services arrived. Brad had sketched this all out and it became the first town plan for Big Rock.

Brad remained in the middle of all discussions about progress for the area. It took about three years of these kinds of decisions surfacing to tell the powers that be that Big Rock at least needed a mayor and a council. Brad became the first mayor of Big Rock.

All the businesses were moving along well. The next big project was to figure out how to best use the new land acquired from Harrison. With three sites Foster now had a lot of land. The site that came from Harrison had a house, barn and a shed. Without disturbing any of the mercantile operations there was the back half of Foster's site, the back half of Brad's site and all of Harrison's site. It was certainly big enough to support a good size ranch. Foster preferred ranching over farming if they had to do anything. That size of a ranching operation required someone that knew how and probably six ranch hands. Foster and Brad asked Jeremy to take over this operation and return with a recommendation as to how to proceed.

Harrison had sold off all the livestock when he left. The grass was high and plentiful with lots of water. Jeremy's first recommendation was to pick up 60 head of cattle and 30 pigs to eat all of this free grass you've got growing here. I figured we could probably use the barn once we made some changes."

Brad and Foster asked "Is this something you could get into?"

"Really, hell yeah. I could make you some good money off this piece of dirt."

Brad then said, "Well if you want to try this, I will go along."

"There might be problems to solve." Jeremy continued. "Well, a big one could be winter food. It would be nice to fence off the East side of the property and the back. You don't have to but it would be nice. There will be times when I need to move the cattle and that would require taking on some help short term."

Ed broke back into current mode, and said, "We need to do a little math to see what they were going through at the time. Let's start with family. There was Foster, Sarah, Jeremy and Winona. There was Brad, Cynthia, Paul and Lydia. You had Alma, Stan, Amos and three other ranch hands. You had a construction crew of four. Now you are taking over another site so you will need probably four or five more hands. So, we are up over 20 people. Now four of them don't live there but still eat if given the opportunity. Now you have a restaurant that with or without travelers will feed on the average another 12 people. I've always said that farm and ranch work is always hard and long, but one thing you could count on was that you ate good and a lot. So, somebody is cooking 3 meals a day for 30 to 50 people.

So, we can easily start with 60 eggs a day. Add in 15 pounds of sausage, 10 pounds of potatoes and some bread or biscuits for breakfast for one day. Now do lunch and then dinner. For instance, if you served chicken 3 times a week you would need 24 chickens a week or 100 a month. The same is true for the quantity you need in beef,

pork, lamb, noodles, vegetables and so on. It is a huge amount of food. Imagine how many chickens you must start with if you are going to eat 1,000 in a year. It takes about 5 months for a baby chicken to get big enough to kill and eat. One hen will typically make two to three baby chicks in a year. You need one rooster for every ten chickens to keep things rolling along. Sounds like you need 500 chickens to get by. Imagine the chicken feed. Better yet, imagine the chicken shit. Imagine killing and plucking them.

How many of you know what animal veal comes from?" Some guessed deer, lamb, goat and others cow. Finally, Ed answered. "It's cow. The difference is veal comes from a one-year-old cow while most beef comes from a two year old cow. A cow makes one cow per year. A bull can satisfy dozens of cows. When cows are born they are separated by sex. Girl cows are for the most part kept for breeding. A few boy cows are given the life of satisfying a bunch of cows where most of them are prepared for eating. All male farm animals pay more attention to eating and fatten up if they aren't distracted by female animals. So they are castrated. So, if you have 100 cows that give birth to 100 little cows and half are boys then somebody has to castrate 90 of them.

Let's do pigs. A pig will have a litter of at least 10 but sometimes as many as 15. The rancher has to be there at the birth to help the process and make sure the sow doesn't inadvertently roll over and crush some. As they are getting ready to birth they are put in kind of a stall. Mom typically nestles in the corner. When they are born the farmer separates them from mom, cleans them up a bit and then takes like a big scissors and cuts off their teeth. It sounds gross but if you don't, they will mess up moms teats big time. This "stall" they are in has one missing board on the bottom. This allows the babies to escape the weight of mom if she is turning. When the coast is clear they come back for the food and warmth. When they get to be about puppy size the males are also castrated. Two guys can spread the legs, make the cut and swap with some antiseptic and finish fifty or so in a day. Another fun job.

Whenever you are feeding a farm animal you are trying to stuff in as much as possible. Setting up troths helps. For pigs especially if you take your grains and mix them with a watery substance that has some additives it makes it more into a meal and easier to consume more. Sometimes you convert barns into feeding rooms. You set up troths around the room, bring in the animals to eat their fill and then switch them out to another group of animals.

You may have hundreds of animals but there isn't one pet to be found. This is product. The job is to as efficiently as possible grow them, have them make more, then lead them to slaughter for food.

So, when Jeremy agreed to take on the management of the ranch operation, remember, it was no easy task. The feeding of the locals became so much easier with the presence of Amos and a full meat cutting operation and the cold room to store product. Before refrigeration, storage of just one animal once slaughtered was a problem. Smokers helped but many prairie people would take turns killing an animal and share it with three other families so collectively they could consume it before it would go bad.

As it was Amos could always have enough beef, pork, lamb and even chicken prepared and frozen. It would be rotated to the cooler and then the kitchen as needed. The other good feature was that if Sarah and crew created a dish for the restaurant that didn't sell, she could always work it in to the staff food. No one on staff ever complained about a meal. They knew better."

Foster, Brad and Jeremy liked the business side of the operation. None of them were excited about farming or ranching. Jeremy has agreed to take on the responsibility. He knows how to ranch and better yet he knows how to hire people to get it done.

The next exciting thing happened when Rachel and Elenore came to visit. They came asking for help. They had

one hand that helped with the sheep. It wasn't enough. They needed one more guy, not all the time but often. They wondered if Foster or Jeremy knew of such a person.

Jeremy asked, "Do you know in advance when you need this help?"

Elenor said, "Pretty much. We can handle the feeding without any help. Borris and our dog keep moving the herd around the property. If we had a person two days a week to stay ahead on projects and for one whole week when we sheer and one full week when we move them out to the train, we would be good."

Foster looked at Jeremy and said, "What have we got that can help."

Jeremy said, "If you are a little flexible on what days you get your project helper we can probably work that into our schedule of men. You might get one guy for two days or two guys for a day but I can schedule that in around other tasks we've got going on around here. We would need to know and agree on what weeks you need a guy for those full weeks. The only thing I ask is that you pay me what I pay them."

Elenore said "That doesn't seem fair"

Foster and Jeremy looked at each other like "You don't think that's fair?"

Elenore could see that they misunderstood her statement. "What I meant is that I should pay you more than you pay the men I'm the one in need here. You are entitled to make a profit for helping me out."

Foster and Jeremy broke into a smile once they understood. "OK, Throw in a lamb roast once in a while."

Rachel said, "Certainly."

Jeremy managing this would become a pain in the ass. The good news is that it required Jeremy to call on Elenore in a business kind of way. He had always had an eye on Elenore, but life got complicated with the death of her dad. But this new interaction became a little more than business. All three families began hosting Sunday dinners.

Jeremy would walk Rachel and Elenore home after a meal that his family had hosted. Rachel knew to run into the house as soon as they arrived. Elenore and Jeremy would sit and talk for a while. Finally, Elenore asked what he had felt when she and her mom had come over asking for help. Jeremy responded. "Well, I knew it was going to be a pain that I didn't need. But I recognized that neighborly acts between cowmen and sheep people were a sensitive subject. Besides, I knew it would be a chance for us to get together."

"Really"

Jeremy said, "Oh yeah all the fuss about Clyde Junior when all that time I was trying to get up the nerve to ask you out."

"Really" again.

Jeremy continued, "You knew it too, don't say you didn't."

Finally, Elenore said, "Well actually Mom had suggested that we go to the Jensions because he met her in town once and offered some help. I told her it would be easier if we went to Foster and Jeremy because they were right next door. I wanted you seeing me more."

A smile came over Jeremy's face as he reached out and took Elenore's hand and began a leisurely walk.

Soon it was Jeremy that was the regular helper. There was always a nice lunch and most often a dinner and another walk. Everybody could see it coming. Even when Jeremy would complain about having to go over to the Vogel place. Foster and Sarah would smile.

During this courtship a special day happened at the restaurant.

One Saturday afternoon the bar and restaurant were quite busy. Sarah, Alma, Foster, Brad and Jeremy were all working pretty hard just to keep up. Paul had come in at the height of the rush. Alma walked out the back door to go to the root cellar to get some more vegetables. She didn't know why she looked up, but she did and noticed three men coming up on horseback. When she went back inside, she saw two of the men come in and take a table. She wondered where the other guy was. After a couple minutes the third guy comes in and takes a seat at the bar. They were intentionally not looking at each other. The two different parties order drinks and food but still don't look at each other. You could tell that all three were looking at the employees and the back room. They were checking it out.

Alma went up to Sarah and said "something is wrong with this guy at the bar and the two over by the window. They rode up together but now they are acting like they don't know each other. It's weird."

Sarah glanced over and said, "They look nervous."

Sarah motioned for Foster and Brad to come in the kitchen. She gave them Alma's report. Brad said, I've been taking care of the two by the window. I'll talk to them a bit and see what they're about."

Sarah said, "I got the guy at the bar, I'll do the same." She tried not to make it obvious, but she kept watching. She noticed he always watched where the money went when she collected it from a customer. She really wasn't feeling good about this guy.

She went over and said, "How was your lunch?"

He barely looked up as he said "Good"

"You from around here?"

He said, "No just passing through."

Paul took a seat at the bar next to the guy posing as a customer.

Brad did a hard study on the two before he went over. They kept looking around. Alma was right something is wrong with these guys. Brad asked, "You men need another drink?"

One guy said, "I'll have another beer." "Me too" said the other.

"I don't recognize you guys, and I know all the locals. You visiting someone?"

"No, we're just passing through."

Brad got the two beers and then went back in the kitchen. He told everyone "These guys are bad. They are casing us for a robbery."

Foster said, "We always knew that this might happen. I'm glad Alma spotted them on the way in. After we close, I want everyone armed and staying here tonight. We are going to have a two man watch in three-hour shifts.

Everyone else stays right upstairs. Listen for the bell. Remember if you're upstairs and hear the bell one of you takes the window to the roof."

Two years ago, Foster rigged up a bell upstairs with a string that comes down to the bar. If a bunch of customers came in, the person working the bar could ring the bell to let someone know they needed help. It looks like the bell is going to have a different use tonight.

Everybody knew not to pay any more attention to the threesome. Paul just sat there drinking a beer not saying anything just kind of looking at this mystery cowboy. The guy at the bar left first. About ten minutes later the two left. The last customer left about thirty minutes after that. They locked up as usual.

Foster and Jeremy had the first watch. The restaurant was dark except for the embers from the fireplace. Your eyes got used to the dark after a while. They sat there in silence. It was exciting and a bit nerve racking. It really was a special time for a father and son to be shoulder to shoulder at a dangerous time. About two hours later you could hear something moving outside. Foster and Jeremy perked up. They waited a moment hoping for verification that someone was out there. They heard a boot on the front step. Jeremy gave a soft quick tug on the string. You now could hear the sound of a tool working on the lock of the door. Jeremy peeked his head around the end of the bar and motioned four with his hand. Foster hadn't thought about that. He figured there would only be three. I guess the scouting party had three but the whole gang had more. Both Foster and Jeremy had shotguns and Foster also had a handgun.

As the lock gave way the first two men walked in with two more behind them on the porch. Foster and Jeremy stood up and fired the first blast. Two men fell immediately as they unloaded the second barrel each. Two men were on the floor and one more was wounded and lost his weapon. One more man charged in the door focused on the bar where the shots were fired. He didn't see Sarah at the top of the stairs. She fired her rifle and the assailant fell. She fired again and again into the crowd lying on the ground.

She heard one man outside saying "shit. Let's get out of here." Then she heard rifle shots coming from the roof. Brad, Paul and Alma were on the roof firing on the men trying to get on their horses. They didn't make it. Jeremy had come out from behind the bar and gone to the door. Foster was covering him as he kicked all the guns away from the "would be" robbers. They all looked dead. Sarah yelled down. "The guy on the end is moving, stand back." Sarah then fired again making sure he wasn't getting up again.

Jeremy was amazed that his sweet loving mother wasted no time in firing on a wounded man. She was in total "protect the home" mode.

Foster, Paul, Brad and Jeremy began dragging the dead off to a spot near the barn. There were six in all. Brad looked up and said, "How did we kill six robbers and not get a scratch."

Foster said, "Well we had the jump on them. We knew they were coming, and they didn't know we were waiting for them. Those first shot gun blasts sure evened the sides quick. And that was some pretty good shooting from the roof."

Jeremy asked, "What are we supposed to do now?"

Foster said, "I'll wire the sheriff in Kansas City. Until he shows up we just stack them and wait."

That was enough excitement for the day. Once they piled the bodies by the barn Foster went to the shed to get some tools and lumber. They might have killed the bad guys but they sure made a mess out of the entrance to the

bar. Foster and Jeremy were able to fix everything and change the lock. Tomorrow in better light they will paint it all out. Now it was time for bed.

In 1924 Jeremy married Elenore. They went on a honeymoon to California. They were amazed at how pretty it was. They really liked taking the train through the mountains. They stayed in San Francisco and loved going to see the ocean. While on their honeymoon they had to decide where to live. Jeremy and his family had amassed lots of money. They could build a home or occupy one of the homes that were created on the property over the last 28 years. Elenore wanted to stay with her mother. This was not one of Jeremy's first choices, but he understood. She has that whole site to maintain along with all the animals. Jeremy agreed as long as he could add on to the home giving them more elbow room and some privacy. Jeremy had always gotten along with Rachel. He was impressed at how she stuck it out after losing Nate. By moving in, Jeremy could manage the sheep operation with the help of hands he got from his home. He was now the general manager of the whole operation. It was getting tiresome.

Everyone was back from the war. Many families like Foster's made the ultimate sacrifice. The war years created industries for war goods. Grain prices rose enticing an increase in farming. No one really noticed that clearing, plowing and farming began to diminish the soil. These mistakes would cost dearly in the years to follow. But for now, times were good.

Prices were stable, farm yields were good and more and more people were eating beef. There were as many cars on the roads as horses. In 1920 Congress in response to many temperance organizations passed the Volstead Act, Prohibition. The enforcement of the act was difficult. Eliot Ness never made it to Big Rock. In fact, nobody else did either. The family bar and restaurant continued to sell alcohol. The general store sold booze too. Not to be blatant they kept the bottles under the table and not on display. The big difference was getting product.

Kansas City was one of the bootleg capitols of the world up there with Chicago and New York. Brad was able to create a relationship with a Kansas City man who supplied trucks full of whiskey. Foster typically made the monthly run for resupply. By 1923 it became more difficult to find product. This caused two things to happen. Every early summer Foster would take a drive to Texas just North of Mexico and get a truck full of tequila. One of the ranch hands knew how to make moonshine. This man Jimmy along with Foster and Jeremy made a still on the back of the property. These three sources supplied sufficient product for the store and restaurant. They had no intention of selling to anyone other than their customers. It was rumored that monthly payouts were made to local and county police and officials. Drinks were always available all through prohibition.

Ed broke from story mode and began talking to the troops. "As you can see my ancestors had a checkered history. A lot of you have heard of moonshine but do you know what it is?

Donnie said, "yeah, like bathtub gin."

"Actually no. Bathtub gin was mixing alcohol with other ingredients to make a liquid that kind of tasted like gin or some other form of drink once you added more flavoring. It was totally unregulated and frequently dangerous. Moonshine was creating alcohol by making a mash of corn or potatoes, cooking it until it boils and steams. You then run it through pipes, usually copper and what comes out is moonshine. Now you bottle it, or many times use

the same jars that Sarah would use for putting up vegetables. The proof was usually 85 to 90 and the taste took a little getting used to. But it sold.

This is a good place to stop.” He looked at his watch and saw that he had been talking for 90 minutes.

Dorothy spoke up. “I’ve lived here all my life and never even wondered how the town developed. I see now that you need water, sewer, roads and the like. I never guessed how that all began.”

Donnie said, “So your grandfather was a bootlegger. That’s cool.”

Ed said, “Well Actually it was my great grandfather, and my grandfather were lots of things with one part being bootleggers.”

Karen asked, “Before we leave can you give a review of who the players are in the story. I want to make sure I’ve got it right.”

Ed said, “I can do that. I’ll only give names to the important ones. There were others. Telling this story requires that I keep the crowd to a controllable number. There were other kids, cousins and uncles. The ones I’m talking about were the major players. We start out with Foster and Sarah. They have been through a lot but are sitting pretty good with a ton of land and half a dozen businesses that are all doing good. One of Sarah’s claim to fame was starting a garden and growing it to the point where they put up over a thousand jars of food every year. Initially this was for their own use and in the restaurant. Then they sold these products in the store.

It is important to know that back then life wasn’t frugal it was “save everything you can so we can survive.” Each successive generation understood the need to save all cuttings and what might be considered waste products. These original settlers knew that they needed everything to help their survival. With each generation this “save everything mentality” softened.

They had a son Foster Jr. but he died in the war. They have a son Jeremy who is slowly taking over the family business. They also have a daughter Winona.

Jeremy married Elenore who is the daughter of the sheep herder family.

Cynthia is the cousin of Sarah who with her husband were living in St. Louis. Brad and Foster hit it off and with Brad’s relationships Foster was able to become the Postmaster, Telegraph station, changing station for the stagecoach. He also helped in securing the train station in Big Rock right next to Foster’s spread.

Brad worked for a farm equipment manufacturer and got the rights to sell their product through Foster. Brad and Cynthia have a son Paul. They took over the second site, right next to Foster’s that he picked up when the previously settler gave up and moved off.

There was a nasty murder that ended up with Della, wife of Clyde being hung and Lucy, daughter of Harrison to jail. This tragedy caused Clyde, Harrison and Clyde Junior to move away. As Harrison left, he sold, at a great price, his initial site to Foster.

Alma is the daughter of Mrs. Martinez who was an initial settler. She works for Sarah helping with all the cooking and running the crew that plants, harvests and cooks all the fruits and vegetables that are preserved.

There was an attempted robbery that was thwarted by the family killing all six assailants.

There are numerous ranch hands. Foster has promoted some of them into specialties like meat cutting, forge operations and other livery skills.

Brad got into politics making sure that as decisions came down, they would be helpful for the family farm.

The list of businesses is Restaurant, bar, hotel, general store, meat butchery and market, granary, and livery to include blacksmith. Additionally, there is a construction company. They sell insulation, water systems for indoor plumbing, windows and doors. They have compressors that make a room cold enough to make ice which they sell to their customers. This refrigeration also improves their bar, restaurant and meat business. They have a gas station and repair facility. They became a distributor for propane that became the new energy source for farming.

Brad keeps suggesting that they should sell off less profitable businesses and focus on the good ones. They are trying to do that now. They would like to sell them to the people who work for them giving them an opportunity to make their life better. Does that bring you up to speed?"

"Yeah, that was great, thank you." Dorothy said.

Gene speaks up with "OK story time is over we've got work to do tomorrow."

Everybody begins to get up and pack it in, Ed noticed that they cleaned their own table as they left.

So begins the end of night threesome nightcap. Leslie begins with, "The story keeps getting better. I'm glad Dorothy asked for a recap. It helps me pay more attention to the major characters and less to the guys that are just in there."

Ed said, "I was afraid this one was going to be boring. It's hard to make sewer lines sexy. I think the book needs some of that detail to show that utilities don't just happen without someone pushing them on. I think the story of the robbery helped."

Leslie said, "You think?"

Gene Said, "I loved it."

"You are the easiest audience in the world. How are we set for tomorrow?" Ed said.

Gene said, I'm ok on regular stuff. I already called in an order for two more TVs. They will be ready for pick up in the morning. I called Paul and he said he would have a guy here after lunch to hang them."

Ed asked, "Do you want me to pick them up? You are a lot busier than me in the morning."

"Sounds good."

Ed began with a new topic, "I'm working up a sheet for each of our team leaders. I want them to talk to all their people one on one and ask what hours you want to work and are there any days you can't work. We've got to get these people some time off before they die. I want them to ask what the shift hours should be including set up and clean up. Once we gather all that up I think we can make a schedule that will be ok for everybody, I think it is time to go."

"Agreed."

As Ed and Leslie left the Bucket it was understood by both that Ed was coming home with Leslie, The only question

was in one or two cars. Tomorrow being a regular workday for Leslie, Ed drove his truck.

After a couple horizontal “I love yous” Ed was the one who brought up, “Where are we going and is it too fast or not fast enough?”

Leslie paused and then said, “I am as happy as I have ever been. I love you and now I’m sure you love me. I sleep so well at night, even when you are not here just knowing that. I have no interest in other men. I so enjoy working with you and Gene at the Bucket. To me everything is just flowers and moonlight, without the flowers or moonlight.”

Ed paused for a long-time giving Leslie some fear about what he was about to say. He said, “You are the first woman I ever loved. You are the one I want to marry, have a family and grow old with. I’m just afraid once you know more of me you will change your mind and want to go elsewhere.”

“That’s dumb.”

Ed said, “I don’t know if it is dumb or insecure, but it is something. I’ve dated my fair share, and some had good things about them. Nothing like this. When I’m busy as hell and the pies are coming out wrong, I think of you and whatever problem I am dealing with becomes no big deal and easy to handle. That’s just thinking about you. When we are together, I am in a state of happiness that I can’t explain.”

Leslie said, “OK, I think we have both fallen for the other. Now we just need to do what makes us the happiest. I love that you come over three or four times a week. I wouldn’t mind seven.”

Ed answered with glee, “Really, I’d invite you to live with me but at 27 years of age I’m still living with my mother.”

Leslie laughed and answered, “Look I know you are living with your mother but that was done for her sake. Will she be ok if you decide to move out?”

“Yeah, especially if it is with you. She thinks of it as building a bridge to grandchildren.” Ed continued, “OK, how about I move in with you to better test our relationship. I might be a slob that drives you nuts. We won’t know until we try. Everything I do seems to tie back to the restaurant. How about I launch the flyer this week and deal with the results. If orders pick up the way they should then I’m going to have some scheduling problems to work through. If I can get in control of that I think it would be easier both physically and emotionally to move in. Sound fair?”

Leslie added with a smile, “Sounds good to me as long as you keep coming over like you have been in the meantime.”

They smiled, hugged and went to sleep.

CHAPTER 21 CHICKEN WINGS, MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL, MARKETING PIECE

Ed got to the bucket at 9:00 and to his surprise, he was the first. He went in, opened up and made the coffee. He went to his desk that had the notes from yesterday, the most important of which was today’s “To Do” list. Huh, it wasn’t that bad. He had a meeting after lunch with all team leaders about schedules. He needed to schedule a meeting with Larry at his brothers place to learn how to better use the accounting system of their computer. Other than that it was finalizing the design of the mailer to be sent out and getting the people to deliver it. Oh

yeah, we have the season opener on Monday Night Football.

Gene came in about 9:40 and was about to apologize when Ed motioned like “Don’t dare” Gene understood and said “Hello”

Ed went over his list with Gene and then asked, “How about you, what have you got?”

“I’ve got the distributors coming in this morning. I want more freebies. I want to see what kind of Monday Night Special I can run. We certainly went through a bunch of beer and booze this past week. I think they need to sweeten the pie a little. My orders are going to be pretty big.

Ed said, “I Wonder how we are going to do tonight with the game. I heard customers talking on Sunday about how much fun it is to watch a game here. I think you’re going to be busy. Is the same special, ok?”

Gene said, “Yeah that worked great. The only other thing I have on my list is the deep fryer for chicken wings. I need to measure the space and then go to the Restaurant distributor in the city.”

“Why don’t you send someone else?”

Gene said, “I like going. It gets me out of here. Besides it tests the other guys on getting it done when I’m not here. By the way I met with all my barmen and figured out a schedule that works for all of them and us.”

Ed said, “Good, I hope everyone else did the same. By the way Leslie and I are going to be moving in together in a week or so after we are over the hump of the marketing blitz.”

“Marketing blitz, my ass. The iron is hot boy. Make your move.”

Ed said, “We don’t have to. We are both committed to each other. Anyway, I’m already over there 3 or 4 times a week.”

“OK, but if you let her get away, I’m going to run you through that pizza oven over there, on high”

Just then Donnie and Dorothy walked in. Again, Donnie was expected but Dorothy was a pleasant surprise. After some quick hellos Dorothy motioned to Ed for a talk. They sat down at a table in the dining room.

Ed asked, “What’s up?”

Dorothy said, “A couple things, first, I made some new slides for the Monday night game. I think you’ll like them. Here is my latest run at the flyer.”

Ed took it and read it over. It was two pages, printed front and back. The cover was mostly the first article with one of the pictures. When you turned it over it was the picture from the second article and pieces of that article edited together to make the biggest splash. The second page was the menu edited to hit the big sellers and fit into all of the front of that page and half of the back side. The bottom half this time was devoted to delivery.

As Ed finished Dorothy was trying to explain why she did what she did. Ed stopped her mid-sentence with “It’s beautiful. You have an eye for this kind of thing. You know what else is good?... You listen. This is in keeping with everything I have said whenever we talked about the flyer. By the way, what do we call this? Sometimes I say flyer, sometimes marketing piece what do you think?”

Dorothy said, “I think it is too nice to be called a flyer. I like marketing piece.”

Ed said, "Well I like this marketing piece. Have you looked into printing and collating etc."

Dorothy added, "It only takes one day to give you 1,000 copies ready for delivery."

"Who's seen it so far?"

Dorothy said, "Just about everyone except you and Gene."

Ed chuckled at ownership being the last to know and then said, "Lets show Gene and then take it to the presses."

As Gene was looking over the piece Dorothy was playing with the computer. Gene began throwing all the compliments Dorothy's way when the TVs came on with a running of the 5 new screens she had created. The first one was the helmet thing she had previously created but this time it was with tonight's teams with a background of Monday Night Football. It was great. The best players in tonight's match up were both quarterbacks and the running back from one team and the linebacker from the other. Dorothy had made a slide on each player complete with picture and stats. On each slide there was a two-inch border reminding all about today's specials.

Gene looks over at Ed with almost a blank stare. Ed shrugged his shoulders like he does when he is amazed. Finally, Gene said, "Yes your marketing piece is great." Then with an elevated happy voice he said, "How in the hell do you do this? Really. I can tell that you have learned lots of tricks on the computer but how do you know the football stuff."

"My boyfriend is a football freak." She said.

Ed said, "Why don't you invite him in for a pizza and a pitcher of beer on us."

"Really. That would be so nice. He hears me bragging about this place, but it would be cool if he could see his pictures and slides in action." Dorothy said.

Gene said, "Yeah invite him in tonight. I'd love to meet him".

Dorothy went away floating. Gene went shopping for a deep fryer. Ed called Larry and made an appointment for some tutoring on the financial package for the software. Donnie was prepping for the day as was Harry. Karen had arrived getting the dining room ready to go. Lunch was lunch. It was reasonably busy complete with 6 delivery orders. Everyone just did their jobs and the meal was behind them with no problems. Ed thought to himself this is how it is supposed to be. Actually, it is supposed to be like this, but nobody should think about it going good. It should be assumed.

After lunch everybody gathered for the meeting. All team leaders had done their homework. Basically, there were three different types of days. Slow, weekday lunch except Friday and Sunday, and Tuesday and Wednesday evening. Medium was Monday and Thursday night, and Sunday and Friday lunch. Pizza and delivery listed Monday night and Sunday early as busy. Busy was all the rest.

Donnie and Karen had both thought through how many people on each shift and when they should arrive. With this information we knew how many we needed, now we just had to figure out who. Ed was watching them work it out. Ed said in the beginning that he preferred to have the team leaders work out the schedules. He was there if there was an impasse or if we needed to hire more people.

There were some rules for scheduling. Avoid as many bell to bell shifts as possible. Try to give everyone some time off on weekends. Each group broke up and started talking it out. Some of the college kids were restricted

because of class schedules. Donnie's schedule came together quickly as did Harry's. Servers, bussers and delivery were a little harder to accommodate. Harry's scheduling was easy so he took on the delivery schedule as well.

Finally, Karen said, "We've got it done but it isn't perfect. We could use one more server and one more busser especially if we get even a little busier. Harry said the same thing for drivers. Ed said, "OK, I'll get one more server, one more busser and two more drivers. If I have them by Friday night, can you get through until then?"

"No problem"

The room was quiet and Ed thought it was over when a new server asked, "I hear there is some story telling going on and that everybody likes it. Are the new guys entitled to listen?"

Ed was afraid this was going to get out of hand. He said, "I really wasn't trying to become the local storyteller. But I guess I'm into that now. I don't want to exclude anyone. Listen it's just me telling a little history of this area. My guess is that you always hated history in school. I don't know why now there is such a draw."

Donnie spoke up. "School history and your history are two totally different things. We who have heard a couple installments are anxious to hear more." Looking at the others he said, "It is so cool."

Ed said, "Well I guess the only way I can do this is to schedule it. OK, we will have story telling Wednesday evening and Sunday evening after we get everything buttoned up. For those of you who don't want to get into a story when it is halfway through, I suggest you get with Donnie for him to give you the short version of what has happen thus far. You don't get extra credit for listening to my boring talks and you are off the clock. Satisfactory?"

"Yeah, that works, come if you want to." Gene said.

Ed said, "Right, now let's get back to work."

Monday night football was amazing. The bar was packed. Deliveries were strong and even the dining room was busier than expected. Dining room service was a little slow just because so many orders were going out to the bar. So be it for Monday being slow. With three servers in the bar and three bartenders behind the bar, Ed still had to pick up a couple tables at half time. All the customers were totally impressed with the slides that Dorothy had made. Ed did hear requests for chicken wings. He told all the servers to say that we'd have them by Sunday. About 8:30 Leslie came in.

She said Hi to everyone and then took a seat in the dining room because the bar was bedlam. She gave Ed a friendly kiss and said, "Is it ever not busy here?"

Ed said, "Three months ago we weren't even open on Mondays. Look at this."

Leslie said, "You have created a happening."

"So did Frankenstein."

It wasn't even a division game, certainly not involving either of the home teams that are represented here. It was just a game. Sunday is going to be interesting.

Just then Dorothy came over with who was obviously her boyfriend. She introduced him to Ed and Leslie. Ed said, "Happy to meet you. We appreciate your photography skills making Dorothy's work look even more amazing than it is."

Bill said, "Thanks. Dorothy comes home every night bragging about this place. She just hopes her work is good enough."

Leslie said, "As you can see that isn't really a problem. She keeps wowing us all the time."

Everyone said thanks and nice to meet you etc. Bill and Dorothy went back into the bar. Again, Dorothy was floating.

Leslie left and Ed went back to help Gene.

CHAPTER 22 DUST BOWL, DEPRESSION, PROPANE, TELEPHONE, ELECTRICITY, GROWTH

Tuesday nothing big happened other than hooking up the new deep fryer and testing wings prepared with three different levels of hotness. Ed was a wimp that liked mild. Most of the servers liked medium. Gene and Donnie were both into hot hot. Ed tried one and found it to be painful. Dorothy made up some table tents announcing the new menu item. Ed noticed that one delivery that came up was a block away from Leslie's office. He made up a double order complete with celery and ranch dressing and told the driver to drop it off for her. Before the driver even returned from his route the phone rang and it was Leslie.

"Thank you so much for the wings. We are all wolfing them down. They're great."

"Did you try one of the eight I had packaged separately?"

"Yeah, my scalp sweat. I had to run for my bottle of water. Do people really order them like that?"

Ed said, "It appears so. I don't get it. I don't like my food to hurt. Donnie and Gene love them like that. Go figure."

Leslie said, "Well they're all gone here. Thanks for thinking of me."

Ed said, "I always think of you. But now I must go back to work. See you later."

Donnie came up to Ed and asked, "Ed, you said you tape your story telling, can I listen to the first couple so I can re-tell it to the troops. I don't mind telling the stories that I've heard but the initial ones I'm a little week on."

Ed said, "Yeah, I think you missed the first four or five. I've got the tapes in my desk. Put them back when you are done."

That afternoon the marketing piece came back all collated and ready to deliver. Ed had put together a team of 4 delivery guys and one of his drivers who was looking for some extra hours. The guys were all freshmen in school. He discovered them because one was the little brother of one of the servers. He divided up the town into 4 sections with one delivery guy each. He met with them to give instructions.

Ed began "What you are doing is important to me and the people who work here. We offer great food at a good price and now we offer the convenience of delivery. Your job is to help making sure that everybody knows about us. Law says that we can't put them in mailboxes, so it is door delivery. Place them neatly and don't make a mess. Don't throw them. Don't cut across lawns. Go back to the street to get to the next driveway. If anybody asks

what you are doing just tell them that you are delivering a package from the Shiny Bucket. I've got Bill dropping each of you off. He then comes back to you time to time to give you more flyers. He has a cell phone. If you have any problems report it to Bill. In your section you might have offices or stores. Just hand one to the counter person and ask if they could post the menu on their bulletin board. Any questions?"

In one day all the marketing pieces were delivered. Ed gave each kid \$50 and \$60 for Bill who also was on the clock. The phone began ringing immediately. Pick up orders increased by 20% and delivery orders went up by 50%. There was no way of telling how much impact this had on inside sales, but they increased as well. It was Wednesday night and Ed had hoped everyone would have forgotten about his story telling promise. They hadn't. Around 9:00 a party of five arrived. Ed went over to seat them when he noticed they were all employees. They came in on their night off to hear a story. To further make the point Leslie was right behind them. Ed motioned them all over to an empty section of the bar. There were only 4 people left in the bar and they were checking out.

Gene hadn't forgotten either. He had pitchers and glasses setting on the table. Ed knew everyone's age from interviewing them. There was only one underage (18) he got a coke. Ed got a bit of a delay as Donnie told the initial stories that until yesterday, he hadn't heard. After about 25 minutes he motioned that he had caught up.

Ed came in and began, "It was the roaring twenties. Lots of people were making money and many were investing in the stock market making money there too. The bar, restaurant and meat operation were all doing great. Providing alcohol didn't hurt. The construction business was incredible. There were two homes left of the original that didn't have indoor plumbing. Most of the homes were putting in hot water heaters. Everybody wanted good windows and doors not only because they looked good, but they kept the cold out. Even the gas station and repair shop were starting to make good money as more and more people bought cars, trucks and tractors. Brad seemed always to be one year ahead of everyone else when it came to machines for the farm. In 1924 he told everyone of a new product that would again change everything. Propane.

He told Foster and Jeremy first. "It appears that the energy business is still moving forward. One relatively new product is natural gas. That will be huge in its day but along with it, was discovered propane. What makes it so special is it is a liquid at normal pressure but converts to a gas when put under a little pressure. So, you can buy a tank of it, hook it up with a simple regulator and it becomes a gas that can fire a stove, heat a house, or even power a car. I've ordered another 200-gallon tank of it. We won't need wood to fire our stoves or water heaters. We can sell the gas, and the products that run on it. Picture how many people would rather not chop wood, ever. I've got the inside on this one. We are going to sell a bunch."

Foster and Jeremy just looked at each other and shook their heads. By now they are used to Brad showing up with magic. Why should this be any different. A week later it arrived. Foster had it hooked up to the stove in another week. The propane was the easy part. He had to build pipes that carried the gas to each burner on the stove. There was enough room because that was where we burned the wood. When he got it going Sarah and Alma looked at it with fear and amazement. The fear went away as did the bin to store the wood.

Just like before when people saw this new magic working in the restaurant and store, they immediately wanted it. There were a couple things that had to be dealt with. First, they needed to make all the pipes and burners for the system so they could merely be taken off the shelf and not built for each installation. Next, they needed to order the tanks for each installation. They settled in on a 35-gallon size that could handle normal usage for a month or so. Then they needed a delivery device and a bigger storage tank. They installed a below ground 500-gallon tank. They hoped they would need to refill it monthly. Once sales took off the refill happened almost weekly. The next thing they needed was a truck with a 150-gallon tank. That way they could service six homes in one trip.

Again, this was a product that you couldn't get anywhere else and whose value was extreme. The price was set accordingly. This whole operation was run out of the gas station.

After a couple days Jeremy felt the need to have a meeting with his dad and uncle. They each poured a drink and took a seat near the fireplace. Jeremy started. "We are getting too big to manage the way we are running things."

Brad said, "I've been telling your dad that for years."

Jeremy continued with "I have a proposal. I know I am the heir apparent to my father's things as is Paul heir to yours. Right now they are all kind of comingled. I suggest the following. Mom and Dad maintain ownership and control over the Bar/restaurant, General store and the meat operation. Brad, you and yours take over the construction business, machine sales, gas station, propane sales and repair shop. I take over all the back lands of your sites, combine that with the Harrison site and the Sheep herder site that I just married into. I think that gives to each of us the stuff we like to do. Mom and Dad like the Restaurant and store. I don't. Brad you like quoting jobs and selling equipment. I don't. I want to ranch. If I had the sheep and Harrison's site tied to the back half of the two sites you have, I would have enough land to have a proper ranch."

Foster looked at his son and said, "You are going to do what I came out here to do. I wanted to work the land but along the way I got into other things. Those other things worked out great for me and mine. Son if that would make you happy then I'm happy also. And yes, mom and I would like to take care of the bar and store. And yes when we are gone that should pass on to you as well."

Brad began, "I think what you are offering is more than fair. You know right now the big money is coming from what you are giving to me. And yes, I have no idea what to do with all that land that is back behind me. Although we have never done anything in writing, yet I think it would be wise to have this drawn up and signed."

And so they did. Jeremy became a rancher of significance. He had a hundred pigs, hundreds of sheep and over 700 cattle. The year after they were married. Elenore went to St. Louis to complete her studies in veterinarian sciences while baby Wyatt was lovingly taken care of by two grammas. Each of the herds or flocks prospered. Many were born many were sold. It was all going well.

Most of the land around here was devoted to ranching. As you moved west the flat land with good top soil was best suited for farming. Each year Brad would take a couple wagons full of samples and catalogues out to this farming country and sell them the latest and best. Prices for all grains were steady and demand was high. These facts made the farmers just that much more aggressive in planting crops. Then a bunch of horrible things started happening about the end of the decade. First it stopped raining. This not only killed farm production it began to ruin the soil.

When you farm you have to till the soil twice just like Sarah's garden. But now you had hundreds of thousands of acres that were being tilled year after year. The next horrible thing to happen was the wind. For some geothermal reason a continual harsh wind came down all the way from Canada. When it hit the over tilled rain denied land it gathered it all up into giant dust storms. All of Oklahoma, 2/3 of Texas and the western 2/3 of Kansas basically blew away. Big Rock fortunately missed most of the calamity. But it still hurt. Cattle were dying. When you cut them open, they were filled with dust and sand. Both of Foster's wells held out but you could see they were getting low.

Before this happened, Brad met with Jeremy and Foster to discuss the future. He started with, "Men, some tough times are coming. I have just pulled my money out of the stock market because it looks too good."

Jeremy said "What, you got out because it looks good."

Brad Answered, "Too good. People are trading stocks at prices that are more than the companies are worth. That can't go on. I suggest you get out if you are in."

Jeremy looked at his dad and asked, "are you in the market?"

"Not a share"

"Me either", said Jeremy.

Brad continued, "Here is one that will impact you, weather."

Jeremy asked, "what about the weather?"

Brad said, "I have friends that keep track of things. Remember those two storms we had earlier this year, we've got more to come. This might sound like madness but believe me these people know what they are talking about. I can't explain it the way they can but there is this major wind system way up in Northern Canada and it is too big to blow itself out. It is coming our way over the next two years, and it is going to change everything."

"Like how?" Foster asked.

Brad said, "You remember those winds we had. Picture that every day. It will be bad on ranchers, but it will kill farmers. Jeremy you currently buy a lot of feed. What would you do if there wasn't any?"

Jeremy jumped in with "You're crazy. The wind is going to blow all the feed away."

Brad responded, "Jeremy, I love you like a son. I've known you since your very beginning. You know me as a lot of things, but have I always guessed right on what is going to happen."

"Yeah, you have but the death of farming, come on."

Brad continued, "Here is my suggestion. Sell off 70 % of all three herds and do it quietly. Prices are good now, you won't get hurt. Keep your best breeders. If I am wrong, you can jump back in with the money you have in your pocket. If I am right, you would lose a strong part of your herd and get half the price on what's left. Please."

Jeremy said, "I've just got the herd to where I want it. I can keep rolling along for a lifetime."

"I have no reason to steer you down the wrong path. I always have pretty good information. Picture if I am right and you don't follow my lead."

Jeremy starts thinking about the animals not being able to graze off the land. Then he thinks about not being able to buy feed. The image in his mind was frightening. "OK, let's say I do this. How do I do it?"

Foster said , "Quietly. We don't say anything to anybody. Next, I think you should move your pigs and sheep by truck. Let me do it through my meat operation. It could be anybody's animals. You're probably going to need to move over 500 animals. If I get three trucks a day you would be done in just over 10 days. Nobody would be the wiser. After we move all of that we do the cattle. Again, I think I should order the train cars. The spur that we load at can't handle 500 head in one load. We could drive a third of the stock up to the next spur. It's about 30 miles. That's over three days to get them there. I think we are better off just making a second load at our spur two days after the first. I don't think anyone is going to notice until the second load shows up. Then it is too late for it

to make a difference.”

Jeremy asked, “Why do we need to keep all this a secret?”

“Lots of people around here think Brad and I are smart fellows. If we decide to liquidate many more would follow. If that becomes a stampede, then the bottom will drop out of the market and prices will fall. Our 1,000 head is no big deal as it relates to all the livestock in Kansas. But if savvy ranchers see what we are doing then it won’t be a thousand, it could be ten thousand or more. That would change prices.

Jeremy says, “Dad, you didn’t even question us doing this. You just went along without a fuss.”

Foster said, “Son, I’ve been working with this man for 25 years now. I haven’t seen him wrong yet. Move your herds.”

So they did. And the storms came. It didn’t hit market price for about 2 months, but it hit. In the months that followed prices dropped by 40%

The farmers to the West pretty much gave up and gathered what they could carry and moved further west out of the reach of the dust. There really was hardship everywhere in the plains. Some of these folks were farming their land for over thirty years. It was there home. They raised their children and even grandchildren there. They couldn’t believe what was happening. At first, they assumed the wind would stop and everything would get back to normal. It didn’t. Their crop died. Their wells went dry. They went through most of their savings and all they had left was a big piece of dirt that couldn’t grow anything. Many were young when they were part of the Westward expansion. Unfortunately, they aren’t young anymore.

Foster and family holdings were unique enough to survive. The train kept moving so the bar and restaurant kept going albeit at half the volume. All construction business and farm equipment sales stopped immediately.

It was a half mile from Foster’s home to Brad’s. On windy days you couldn’t get there. Brad, Cynthia and the kids decided to move in with Foster and Sarah. Between the house and the hotel rooms there was enough room for everybody. Soon it became apparent that Elanore, Wyatt and Rachel should move in also. Foster had to lay off most of the farm hands. Sarah kept Alma on but knew the garden was going to be much smaller. Foster and crew build a solid fence to keep the prevailing winds from the north away from her produce. Even so yields were way down.

Just when you thought it couldn’t get any worse the stock market crashed ushering in the Great Depression. When you hear about the great depression you think everybody was out of work. That’s not true, but over a third were. Many of the wealthy farmers were heavily invested in the stock market and lost everything. Foster looked at and decided, “I really don’t know how I am making the money I’m making but at least I see how it is happening. I don’t know anything about stocks. I’m keeping my money where I can see it.”

Jeremy’s reduced herd was still large. The good news was that there were multiple barns. They gathered up as much vegetation off the ground as they could. They filled two large silos with grain. The lofts of all buildings were full of hay. They had a couple years of supply if nothing grew. Fortunately, because they were on the Eastern end of the state it wasn’t that bad. The residents in the combined family and staff numbered 15. They had enough meat for a decade. The massive collection of canned fruits and vegetables started going down. They took them off the shelves for sale.

I guess the overwhelming feeling was one of despair. Whatever problem that came up in the past was usually

curable with hard work and sacrifice. This time they had no control on the events that changed their lives.

The first full year was kind of like winter. Nothing much going on outside and time to work on things inside. There were still customers coming in with hopes of fresh supplies. The people who still had money came out for dinners and drinks. That year there were over 50 animal births, five on one day. Elenore showed everybody how to shear sheep. Sarah and Cynthia liked it. Paul got pretty good at it too. Life was pretty good. There was always enough food. People had time to enjoy each other. The men were getting restless. They were used to working dawn to dusk and now sitting seemed weird.

Jeremy was busy most of the time just making sure his cattle, pigs and sheep were fed and protected from the elements. Jeremy kept an eye on the market. Prices were posted in the newspaper so Jeremy could tell if he wanted to sell off more of the herd. Prices started to come back. There was still a demand. Once the fear got out of the market prices began to stabilize. Jeremy really wanted to keep most of his herds but there was always the fear of not being able to feed them. He sold off another 1/3 of his stock. Now he had lots of money and a much smaller gathering of animals to tend. Occasionally, there would be a knock on the door. It would be a man or a whole family asking for food. Sarah always took care of them. The bunkhouse was empty. She would often let the families with children stay there for a couple days. She would feed them well and after 2 days send them on their way with some food for the road. They never gave her any trouble by asking to stay longer. They were just happy they had a two-day rest with food. They couldn't thank Sarah enough.

They got the Kansas City newspaper in the mail every day. It was always at least a day late but that didn't matter much. The reports on city life were brutal. It was tough to find work, tough to buy food, tough to pay bills. Lots of evictions and bread lines were mentioned in the paper.

The twenties were weird. Lots of people were making lots of money, and they spent it fueling even more profits. The major factor was oil, or better put gasoline from oil. So many things were made easier to complete because you had this new energy source. You could certainly see it in farming. Industry grew as labor intensive jobs became assisted by machines fueled with gas.

Ed went back into conversation mode with "If you were to create a technology curve starting at the dawn of man that curve would be almost flat for hundreds of centuries. OK, you had making fire, the wheel and better weapons but there were no spurts to think of until you hit the 20th century. Think of all the inventions. Telegraph, telephone, electric lights, automobiles, airplanes and so on. So this flat curve finally shot up at a rate not surpassed until the computer came along. Fortunes were made at the same time as people lost everything. Even in Foster's little world you had all of the products that Brad sent his way. Refrigeration was a game changer. City water, sewage, natural gas, and even the way you build roads with McAdam. People of this time learned that new things were happening right in front of their eyes. When the bubble burst people went from living great to barely living at all.

Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1932. He enacted policies to bring the world back from the brink of despair. Over 3,000 banks went under causing hundreds of thousands of people to lose everything they had saved. It was called a "run on the banks". If people got nervous about the security of their savings, they ran to the banks to take it all out. The banks didn't have all that money in cash sitting in a vault. It was lent out in mortgages and loans. When Roosevelt issued a guaranty on all deposits people no longer felt they had to retrieve their money and the banks and deposit were safe.

He enacted lots of programs to get the country back on its feet. He created jobs by building infrastructure projects like municipal buildings, roads, bridges and dams. The one that helped our part of Kansa was the dam. That

project put hundreds of people to work. Once completed the dam was the source of electricity needed for our end of the State.

Ed went back to storytelling. So, in the twenties life wasn't too bad in Big Rock. Then it got better. In the early thirties the winds of war were starting to blow in Europe. There was strong reluctance to entering the war. But everyone was in favor of supplying our friends with weapons and munitions.

It took about four years for the electricity from the dam to come online. Two years before that the delivery system was initiated. Telephone service piggy backed on this system of poles and transmission stations. Back East these services had been around for a while. When you think about it, it makes sense. If you run 1,000 feet of line you can service 15 homes on either side. You can then spread it 4 or 5 properties deep, so you get over 100 customers. Out here if you run 1,000 feet of line you almost made it halfway to the first house. When these monopolies were granted, part of the deal was that they had to serve the rural along with the urban. The rural customers were not the first in line.

But in the mid-thirties electrical and phone service arrived. Advancements in telephone technology were such that by the time it got here the phones were quite modern. They had a rotary dial, so you didn't have that crank thing you see in the movies. You did have party lines though.

Without these improvements other developments couldn't have happened like about 12 miles from Big Rock a plant was built specifically to produce war product that the British needed. That plant created over 40 construction jobs in building the facility. Once opened it hired over 120 people in manufacturing. In the early forties employment ramped up to multiple shifts now making the same product but for our troops. Many of the factory workers were female.

The other thing that happened that was important was the creation of the college. It started out small with 100 students in each grade. In four years, it doubled in size. In another four years it nearly doubled again causing it to seek and achieve University status. All these things changed Big Rock from a ranch community to a small town with real jobs.

In 1925 Winona graduated from college. She entered medical school for another three years. Her mom, dad, brother, aunt, uncle and cousins all attended both graduations. Winona became a full fledge doctor the same year, 1929, that the bottom fell out of the economy. She came home and began treating patients for small economic reward from an office created in two rooms of the first floor of the family home. Every time Foster or Sarah saw Winona with her stethoscope on, they swelled with pride. Their daughter was a doctor.

Meanwhile bad news fell upon the family. In 1933 Sarah died. She had always been a strong woman. There weren't many women who could survive the hardships of prairie life. She not only survived, she reveled in it. She lived through all the hardships of prairie life, raised a family and was a constant contributor to the development of the home with its many businesses. Everyone was crushed but Foster most of all. Sarah was the only woman in his life. He kept remembering all the good times starting with a pair of shoes. Even the bad times were manageable because of the love they shared. It was more than the financial victories. They were known and liked by all in the valley and beyond. Despite all their successes they never looked down on anyone. They were always friendly and helpful.

Frequently, you don't notice the number of lives you impact as you move through your daily chores. Sarah didn't get to hear the praises she received at her funeral. Over two hundred people showed up to pay their respects. Sarah stories were told at the wake by many. Sarah stories almost always included her life mate Foster. So many

reported about the love, skill and hard work that came from this simple woman from Buffalo, New York. Foster sat in emotional pain as he heard the many praises.

As it so often happens Foster died just four months after Sarah's passing.

It was bad enough dealing with the death of both his parents but now he had to run all the family businesses. It was a huge task, especially because Jeremy didn't like people businesses. He liked pushing animals. Cynthia and Brad pretty much took over the retail operations.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor the US went to war. Wyatt was almost at the age eligible for the draft. Jeremy was just too old. Brad had again come through with magic.

Brad called a meeting with Jeremy, Paul, Wyatt and Elenore. Elenore was included in this meeting because she really knew the sheep business. Brad began, "I have negotiated a government contract that I think would be real good for the family if all here want to do it."

Jeremy jumped in with "Well that's got everybody's interest. Tell us more."

Brad got out his papers and then said, "The government is willing to give us a contract for as much meat, Cow, Sheep, pig and chicken as we can produce for the next five years. They are willing to pay 10% more than the prevailing price at the time. They are willing to give us \$30,000 to buy equipment and help with stock. What they want in return is all we produce. We can eat, family consumption, and serve in the restaurant, but all other product goes to them."

Jeremy said, "You're kidding me right?"

"No. They want every pork chop and hamburger we can produce."

Elenore was next to speak. "What about wool?"

Brad said, "I don't know, but I will ask."

Jeremy asked, "How do they want it?"

Brad looked up with a weird look and said, "How do they want it?"

"Yeah, how do they want it on the hoof, as sides of beef, or fully butchered into steaks and chops?"

Brad smiled and said, "This family has always amazed me. I come up with what I think is the deal of the century and you immediately look to see how it can be made better. Amazing. That too is an excellent question."

Jeremy said, "Well look at the difference, if we just do the first level of butchering look at all the money they would save just in transportation. It's worth asking. Setting up a high-volume butchering operation is no big thing. There is a whole other layer of profit in this thing, if we want to go for it."

Wyatt was next to speak up. "Dad, did you hear what Uncle Brad got for us. The first part of the deal is huge. I imagine we would be looking at least doubling our output if I'm hearing it right."

Brad was looking at Wyatt when he said, "Yes, they are looking for maximum output."

Jeremy came back with, "I know. Sometimes I reach too far. It was worth thinking about it. I still like Elenore's

question about the wool. OK, how would we maximize output?"

Brad said, "One thing I can get for you is feeding lots, especially for pigs. We want to make it as easy as possible to get food into these animals. We want to take advantage of any grazing opportunities we can muster. We need some land planning to figure out what part of the property do we grow what kind of feed. There is a lot of arithmetic here."

Jeremy then said, "To answer your initial question of do we want this kind of deal, the answer is a big yes. Now we must figure out how we are going to raise the biggest herds. Brad, I love you and I'm not trying to be difficult here, but do they care if it was all cow or all sheep or what kind of mix do they need? Personally, I'm not into pigs but if you wanted to raise the most animals for our property the answer would be pig. So, if you had a guaranteed price on all we could deliver I'd say let's raise pigs. A cow makes one calf a year. A pig has litters. Replenishing the herd happens by itself."

Wyatt spoke up, "Uncle Brad is this deal on the hush, hush? Are they out making deals like this all over the Midwest? It would be great if we could have a couple days to do some research."

Brad answered, "I don't know if they are making other deals or how many. I can meet with them in two days and ask all your questions. I think I should start off the meeting with a "yeah we want the deal. Let's figure out how we can best handle your needs." Tomorrow, I'm going to look into what feed lots cost and how much do they help the procedure. Maybe I can get more money upfront to make such improvements that will benefit both our positions.

Is everybody comfortable with that? Just by talking to you tonight I know better what to ask for. If we play this right this could be a huge deal for the family."

Jeremy then added, "We need to know if what we give them is valued by the head or by the pound. The difference is huge. By the pound we need to focus on feed lots to fatten them up. By the head they get skinnier cows and pigs. I'm not trying to be clever but you should point out the difference, so they make the right kind of deals with all the other ranchers."

Brad said, "That is an excellent point. These guys aren't farmers. We want what is good and fair for us, but we also want what is fair for our country. That is very good Jeremy."

Paul then said, "Dad, you keep coming up with positive surprises. I bet you are going to do it again. I agree with Wyatt, we need to do some research on how to rapidly expand herds.

CHAPTER 23 GOVERNMENT DEAL, GROWING THE HERD, HOME BUILDING –

RANCHING MATH, HOW THE BUCKET WAS BORN

He was able to negotiate a contract to raise cattle, pigs and sheep for the government. The contract was a beauty because it gave Jeremy \$30,000 up front to buy stock and improve facilities. It then guaranteed to buy everything the farm could produce at 10% over prevailing prices. And because he had a contract with the government to produce meat, they excused Jeremy, Wyatt and Paul from the draft. Having a guaranty made Jeremy build all three herds to maximum capacity. The contract wasn't specific but requested about the same number of pigs as cattle. Sheep expectations were half of that.

Jeremy bought up as many young cattle as he could get his hands on. Between his 500 plus acres and all the government land to the South Jeremy built up three huge herds, four if you count chickens. Because of the draft men were scarce but there were lots of women who wanted the work. Pigs and chickens pretty much stayed in one place. Cattle and sheep needed to move around to graze where the grasses were good. Jeremy was always on the lookout for male ranch hands. He was surprised at how many women learned the job and performed it admirably. He even bought a couple sheep dogs. He loved watching them work the herd.

Ed broke from storytelling mode connecting to his audience.

"Any of you guys grow up on a farm?"

A couple hands went up.

"How about a ranch?"

A couple more.

"There are lots of different crops to farm and lots of different kind of animals to raise. Some of these procedures are gross. Now at least we have animal rights groups that are trying to keep an eye on factory farmers, to ensure some level concern for the animals being raised. This business is not for the weak at heart. For us to have food in our daily life some weird and ugly things happen to the animals that make up that food. It starts out with you never thinking of the animal as a pet or even a life form worthy of concern for its personal safety.

We raise and kill animals to feed ourselves. It is not pretty. Comfort is seldom provided. If you are going to be in this business for a long time you must get over concerns for the beast other than those that relate to our profit.

I'm going to take some broad strokes in my description of ranching. Basically, we buy small animals. What sex they are frequently defines their path. Our job is to make lots of animals, with lots of meat that we harvest after we kill the animals. So, female animals make little animals after they are introduced to a male animal. Cows make one a year. Pigs have litters.

Male animals are kept alive to mate with female animals. All animals not involved in making little animals are fed (a lot) and then taken off to slaughter. Male animals that are no-longer mating are castrated to eat more and grow more.

So, when you have an open contract to buy at a good price everything you can produce you do everything you can to grow your herd. Suffice it to say that many vegetarians are created when a city high school takes a field trip to a

hog farm. I'm always asked how much research went into writing my paper. Most of it came from the diaries that the women in my family kept. One exception is raising animals. I had to go to the library and read up on animal husbandry and farming. I could never be a rancher. Now back to the story.

Jeremy was getting a very good price for his stock, and they would buy all that he could deliver. With the passing of his folks, he needed someone to manage the retail end of the operation. There still wasn't much construction work and no farm equipment sales so it was good that Brad and Cynthia took over the restaurant, bar, store and meat business. Meanwhile Wyatt was there to help in all areas while he was being cross trained in all the facets of the family business. It was funny but nobody ever worried about who made what money. Everybody had everything they needed. Everybody worked hard. Everyone gathered for Sunday supper. Afterwards there would be a meeting to see how everything was going. Brad was always good at putting numbers together so that

everybody understood how the whole operation was going. When the local construction business fell away Paul moved over to take on whatever family tasks surfaced. In this instance it was helping with the ranch. Paul and Jeremy always got along. Jeremy felt he could always count on him to deliver. Staffing problems would be addressed especially if the herds needed more hands to move them. Alma had organized the garden again. It was kind of a tribute to Sarah. She got the ladies necessary to plant, weed, harvest and put up the fruits and vegetables. Now it was called a victory garden.

Ed went back into current mode. "Alright earlier I took you through how much effort went into growing enough food to feed your staff and customers. Now the deal has changed significantly. They just got the green light and a \$30,000 kiss to grow as many animals as they can for the next 5 years, at least. They had 500 acres to work with along with a huge amount of government land free for the grazing. Currently on the combined properties they had three barns and some other outbuildings for storing tools and equipment. They had an initiating herd of 100 cattle and 50 pigs. They also had 70 sheep. They had over 400 chickens but needed almost all for their own use.

Jeremy figured he could pick up another 50 head of cattle without too much trouble. He thought he could probably do that every year. The rest of the growth would have to come from within. His 50 pigs were almost enough to start a huge pork operation. Ed also picked up hundreds of pollutes or baby chicks to grow a crop as big again as the one he has.

Cows need some buildings primarily to final feed. Chicken coops, even big ones aren't that tough to build.

It is better to build chicken coops rather than convert barn space. They knew what they needed. If they used two of the barns for cattle, they could build feeding troths around three sides. Each barn could handle 80 cows at a time with three different 4-hour feedings. So, you could fast feed about 500 cows, all male. Then they thought in the beginning they aren't going to have that many so only do one barn for that. Use two barns for birthing the calves. Each barn can support about 60 cows. Hopefully they all don't give birth the same day, for lots of reasons.

The pigs are going to need four barns. To maximize the space, you put one stall along each of the two long walls and two stalls back to back in the center. You've got two isles for access. You do this with two barns. You need two barns with feeding troths not much different than what you do for the cattle. If you didn't have enough barn space feeding troths could be set up outside. Although there was a lot of ground water it needed to be run to water stations or troths for better access.

So right from the start they had to build 4 barns, three huge chicken coops and three different large corals.

Ed went back to current mode. "Ok we are going to do a math quiz. I brought pens and paper."

You could hear the moaning in the crowd.

"Here are your problems. First cattle. A cow makes one calf a year. If you start 100 cattle with what you know how many cows will go to market each year for five years. Don't count any that would die or get eaten by family, staff or restaurant.

OK second question. If you start with 50 pigs do the same thing with the same assumptions."

Gene and Leslie were looking at Ed like they got some dispensation from the exercise. Ed gestured get to it.

A couple minutes went by. Finally, they started talking to each other. No, half are boys. They go to market. The girls go back to make more.

One new guy asked do we subtract the bulls that are kept for breeding.

Ed answered, "Good question, but just disregard them."

Donnie, Karen and Dorothy were working together. After a couple arguments they think they had it. As they were moving on to pigs when they heard Elery say, "Wait a minute. That's impossible. There is a mistake here."

Some people were looking at what he had done. He had a nice little chart that worked great for the cows but when he started on the pigs the numbers went weird on him. The others looking on said, "No, you're right, really"

Ed started, "OK, how are we doing?"

Donnie spoke up, "We got through the cow thing ok you've got almost 1,500 at the end of five years and over 2,200 if you add in the last 750. We started on the pigs when we heard Elery. We looked at his numbers and...

Elery broke in with "you've got over 300,000 pigs. Something is wrong there."

Ed said, "Yeah it's like you are at a pig Amway meeting. That 10 multiplier really makes a difference. Clearly the pigs are not the limiting factor here. For beginners you would need about 400 barns, secondly the smell of pig shit would be making them wince in Kansas City."

Donnie persisted, "Wait a minute, if the government is buying all you can produce why not give them a half million pigs?"

"Donnie, you would need 1,500 pig farmers. As it was they had to build 3 more barns to handle what they did raise. As you see the first couple years of production aren't too bad. By the end they were sending off over 20,000 a year. That is still a lot of pig.

The production was so huge, all combined they grazed all their land and bought all their winter feed. The family made a bundle on this deal.

Each family kept growing. Paul had a son named after him in 1932. Soon there were three generations of the family working the operation.

Cynthia took ill and quit working the store. Brad kept managing the operation but did so with more hired help and less of his time as he tried to take care of his wife. Unfortunately, she didn't make it through the winter. Brad was

now the last of the initial group. That didn't last for long. He kept showing signs of wiriness. He spent his last year teaching Wyatt and Brad's son Paul and daughter Lydia the workings of the family business. Wyatt pretty much knew all of it but Paul and Lydia both learned well. After his passing Jeremy Paul and Lydia met to decide what to do with their collective holdings. Jeremy had his hands full with running the ranch part of the estate. Lydia was interested in the store and restaurant while Paul wanted to work in construction but offered to manage the overall non ranch operation including the meat business and the service station.

Sad news came in the form of a green sedan pulling up in front of various houses. That was how they told you that your son, husband or father wouldn't be coming home. It was tragic. Everyone tried to reach out to the injured family but there was nothing really that you could do. You lost a loved one.

Lydia decided to make up a package of meat, canned fruits and vegetables along with some candy. She then wrote a letter of condolence and put it all in a basket. She would deliver the basket a couple days after the bad news had hit. It was just a nice thing to do for family that is going through the ultimate bad time.

Finally, the war ended. Men were coming back home in hopes of starting all over again. Many were injured. Many more were injured with no visible scars. It isn't natural to kill people. It isn't natural to see your friends die. Even recognizing these problems, the world was a happier place because the killing had stopped.

The restaurant and bar were busy every night. People were celebrating home comings. It was wonderful to see all the happy faces. Looming in the background was the question of what we do with all these returning veterans. Factories that were devoted to the war machine changed directions and began producing consumer goods like washers, dryers and stoves. The GI bill allowed for veterans to buy a house with no money down. This was going to be another boom if we figured out how to do it.

In 1946 the government contract expired with them taking all that we wanted to surrender including the breeding stock. It was decided to walk it back to 150 cattle, 40 pigs and a couple hundred chickens.

In 1946 Jeremy was 46 years old and Wyatt was 24. Paul was the owner of the adjacent piece was 21. Jeremy now had three complete sites, that being the initial site complete with rock, restaurant, general; store and meat business and the site acquired from Harrison and the third complete site acquired through marriage to Elenor. He also had the back portion of what was Brad and Cynthia's site with the front now owned by Paul. Jeremy always got along with his cousin Paul. He thought it would be more proper if Paul had title to the back half of what was initially the site of his parents. Jeremy who had more than enough land deeded that half piece back to Paul. Jeremy thought Wyatt was a little young to take over the ranch, so he conducted numerous interviews to find someone to take over that operation. He hired Randall to perform that function. Jeremy had weekly meetings with Randall and Wyatt to make sure all was going all right. Similarly, he hired a manager for the retail operations. Duane ran the restaurant, bar, meat market and store. Lydia continued to work the store while keeping an eye on Duane's management. Again, Wyatt was in on all meetings. Jeremy was anxious for Wyatt to show that he could manage both the managers. It was moving along that way. Even with the salaries for both managers both businesses were making a profit of consequence.

Independent of the above Elenore was managing the sheep business. She decided to stay out of the war expansion of the herd. She had a couple hands for the hard work. She took care of the buying, selling and health of the animals. She also provided vet services for the cattle and pigs. Finally, she surrendered management of the sheep to Randall.

Jeremy and Elenor had a very nice income from these three operations, plus a huge retirement account from part

of the profits of the Government money. They really didn't have to do anything else, but Jeremy felt obligated to keep the family business or legacy moving forward. He wanted to create something his son could enjoy. He met with his son to determine what part of the business he would like to work in. He didn't want the bar or store. He liked ranching but understood that the real estate part of the business was the best choice. Wyatt met with Paul Jr. to discuss the feasibility of a venture. He asked Paul, "Would you like to become a home builder?"

Paul answered, "Yeah, that's exactly what I want to do. My dad did well enough at it to retire and move to Florida. For the last 10 years he has been teaching me everything I need to know. The thing you really need to have is steady work. I've been picking up construction work here and there. Because it is spotty, I can't hire a full-time team. If I knew I was building 6 to 8 houses a year I could get it all organized"

Wyatt said, "With the GI Bill I think we could develop streets that are currently on the County plan, specifically Peach, Pear and Plumb. I have the money to run sewer, water, roads and curbs four houses deep on each of those three streets. Two of those streets I want to be starter homes right for returning GIs. The other street I want to go a little more upscale. My plan is quite simple, I develop, you build and I sell. Keep giving me a price I can live with and we will sell what you build. As we do, we further extend the roads to sell more. As long as the demand holds up, we could build homes on the land we own for more than a decade. What do you think?"

Paul said, "I love it. We should have one complete home on each street with the plans for different layouts that people could select. I think it's great. With steady work I can develop a full-time crew that knows what they're doing. Let's do it."

Ed went back into conversation mode. "So, my family made it through the dust bowl and great depression pretty much unscathed. In the war years they made money raising livestock for the Government. At the end of the war they hired managers for the ranching and retail operations as my grandfather and father started his development company initially building houses for returning veterans."

"You know there is one story I haven't told you yet. The Martinez piece."

Gene smiled because he knew some of this but was sure he was going to learn more.

Ed continued. "As you recall the Martinez family was in the initial land rush and settled 5 sites down from my family piece, which places it right here."

Everyone kind of looked around realizing just how local this story had become.

Ed went on." The first year was the hardest like it was for everybody. The family almost starved to death but survived to plant a solid crop the second year. They had many cousins come and help with all the work. The daughter, Alma, found work helping Sarah. That pay contributed much to the survival of the family during the early years. Because so many of the surrounding neighbors went into ranching the Martinez's grew grains and grasses. They had no problem selling it right down the street, often to my family. In the war years my family bought everything the Martinez family grew. Alma was able to hire other cousins to help with the garden that Sarah kept expanding. It was a good life. They never got rich, but they owned land and were able to feed their extended family. When WWII came they had two grandsons that were of the age to fight. They both went and only one came home. Jorge and his sister were what was left of the family after the tough years. Neither of them had a love for farming.

Alma had died in 1952. Maria the daughter of Alma had gone to school to learn bookkeeping. She got a job in town at the bank. Jorge her brother worked construction. They both lived in the original house that had been

modernized and expanded over time.

They rented out the acreage to the Jensons who had a farming operation next to them. Both Maria and Jorge married and had children. Maria stayed in the family home and Jorge built his own home on the other side of town. Both couples had children who grew up around the property but never showed an interest in doing anything with the land. The kids all completed high school and found jobs. Jorge's son Tom went to work in a restaurant and loved it.

One day Frank Jenson who had been renting the property for years met with Maria and Jorge and offered to buy their property. Land prices were on the rise and the offer had merit. After some negotiating they settled in on the offered price but they held back 20 acres that included the house and 2,600 feet of frontage on the street. The brother and sister split the money with Maria keeping the house and Jorge getting a site for a restaurant right in the middle of the parcel. Jorge and son Tom would build the first Mexican restaurant in town.

It took five years for Jorge and Tom to figure out that people in Kansas weren't ready for tacos and burritos. They closed the restaurant. It took a year, but they finally found someone dumb enough to buy the place. Enter Gene."

Gene popped in with, "OK, it looks like I get to do some story telling for a change. I owned and operated a bar in Chicago for 12 years. One day this yuppie kid comes along and offers to buy my place. Everybody thinks running a bar or restaurant is easy and even fun. That's because they have never done it. They don't know the hours it takes or all the problems they will run into. They think they are going to sit around and watch the money roll in. Well, this two comma kid offers me just about twice what my place was worth. I figured anyone dumb enough to offer me that kind of money would probably pay more. I added fifty thousand to the number and damn if he doesn't pay it."

Donnie interrupted, "What's a two-comma kid?"

Gene answered "You know 000, 000, 000. Filthy rich and never worked a day. So for the first time in my life I've got a bunch of money in my pocket and nothing to do. I decided to drive West and see the country a little. By the time I got to Kansas City I was already bored to death. I had a brother in a town called Big Rock that I hadn't seen in years. I drove out to Big Rock and saw a building for sale. I bought what would be called the Rusty Bucket."

Ed continued with, "I think that's all the story telling I've got in me for tonight. We'll pick up here, about forty years ago, with our next session.

Everybody started saying thanks, great stories and the like. Harry said, "You know just regular history is fun to listen to but knowing that all these stories took place right here is awesome."

Donnie said, "Yeah the normal stuff is cool but you always seem to have at least one story that is way over the top. I mean really the shoot out. Your family had some weird things happen along the way."

Ed said, "Yeah but remember how much time were talking here. It isn't like all this happened over a weekend. We're talking decades of time. When you look back it compresses the time. Remember there were years and years of just plain hard work. Sarah's garden for instance. Each year she would plant based on what she thought she would need for the restaurant. So, in the second year she figured she would need lots of potatoes to go with the steaks she was serving. So, grow potatoes. The third year she had over 300 feet just of potatoes. Another fun story was how Alma introduced the family to BBQ sauce. Her original recipe became important in the direction the

restaurant would take in its future.”

Dorothy said, “I think the whole thing is great. Do you mind me asking how you take all these stories and put them in your book?”

“Not as well as I would like.” Ed answered then continued. “I tape all the story telling sessions. I have my original thesis that moves along the same timeline. The hard part that I don’t automatically have written down are the contemporary restaurant stories. So at the end of each story telling day I write down what interesting thing happened in the restaurant that day or week. So today for instance the story of the jerk Legislature guy, complete with Karen telling him “we’re a sports bar too” gets marked down on a piece of paper and worked in when I start writing it all. I’m pretty well caught up. I have a few things from our last session and all of today’s stuff to write out yet. The good news is that I enjoy doing it. Here is one that is strange. I’m going to write about you asking me how I write this.”

Donnie pumped in, “Woo, that is weird. Some kind of time jump deal.”

Karen said, “You’re the one that’s weird.

Everybody was happy and anxious for the next session.

CHAPTER 24 – WYATT TAKES OVER, THE BIG DEAL

LESLIE COMES ON BOARD, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The crowd broke up leaving the threesome at the bar. Leslie said, “That was so much fun.”

Gene said, “Yeah even I got to tell a story. That was fun.” He freshened everybody’s drink.

Gene then looked at Leslie and asked, “Les, How do you like your job?”

She said, “It’s ok. It’s a job. A girl’s gotta eat. It certainly isn’t what I wanted to do but it’s ok.”

Gene said, “Are you open to listening to a proposal?”

Ed jumped in with, “You’re on your own here. I am too close to be part of this discussion. But I sure want to listen.”

Leslie looked first at Ed then to Gene and said, “Talk to me.”

Gene said, “You know I love you almost as much as him. Nothing would make me happier than having you work for the Bucket. I’ve been thinking about it, looking for the win, win. Here’s what I came up with. The part of the job that I hate the most is the paperwork. Money counting, deposit making, sales tax computations, employee payroll and reports, inventory control systems etc. I bet I spend three hours a day at that. It seems like ten hours a day, but it has to get done. If we built a position for you that started with that responsibility it would free me up drastically. Do you think you could learn how to do that?”

Leslie answered. "Yeah, I do that where I am. Less people but same stuff. I don't mind it."

Gene continued, "Well if we started with that and added in work at the door, managing some shifts in the kitchen and God knows what else, I could pay you whatever you are making now, no, more than what you are getting and the big one.....let you run your design business from here."

Leslie said, "You offered that without even knowing what I'm making now. You have a weird way of negotiating."

Gene continued "I know what I want and I'm going to get it. Now there's no hurry. You don't have to start until tomorrow."

Ed and Leslie laughed until they looked at Gene and saw he wasn't joking. Leslie then looked at Ed and asked, "Would you like to be working with me?"

"Absolutely."

Leslie looked at Gene and said, "I have to give my boss at least two weeks. Until then I can work both places. You just hired me."

Gene threw his hands over his head and started dancing like a kid. "Yes, yes I love it. Now you can get with Ed and Henry's guy to learn the computer reports and I don't have to. Yes, yes, I love it."

Ed looked over, then grabbed Leslie for a big hug and said, "I'm actually as happy as he is. I'm just more adult in the way I express myself." Then he kissed her.

Gene said, "OK back to work for a second. We've got Monday Night Football and an ever-growing delivery business. Are we set for that?"

Ed said, "We're as ready as we're going to be. I do have a request of you Gene. No hurry, but start looking for sports teams to sponsor. I'd like Men's softball, girl's soccer and boy's baseball. As your sports crowd gathers to watch the games keep an ear to the ground for teams. They probably need a hundred or so for the fee. The kids can come for pizza after their games and we'll buy the first pitchers for the men's team. It will pay off eventually."

Gene said, "Yeah I know the guy who knows all the different leagues. He'll hook us up. Anything else?"

Ed said, "Yeah, pour us a brandy to celebrate the most successful hire for the Shiny Bucket."

Gene said, "With pleasure."

Leslie smiled and said, "You guys are so sweet. Cheers"

The first Monday Night Football was a block buster. Standing room only in the bar. We sold a ton of pizza and a truck load of chicken wings. The dining room was kind of normal but the delivery business was big. We had 5 drivers on and pushed out over 70 orders.

Leslie was on the door with Ed. She learned how to dispatch the drivers. At the end of the night, she learned how to check out the drivers and collect the money. She also cashed out checks for the servers. The three servers in

the bar were slammed. Ed stepped in and took five orders at the height of the night until they caught up. The thought running through Ed's mind was; If this is Monday what in the hell is Sunday going to look like?

The dining room was empty by the time the game ended. When the game ended there was a mass exodus. There were four die-hards at the bar finishing their drinks while rehashing the game.

Leslie watched Gene close everything out Monday night. Tuesday Leslie closed out with Gene watching. Gene was fascinated with how quickly she learned. Wednesday, she closed out by herself. Gene checked it over and it was perfect.

Being Wednesday the crowd gathered to hear the next chunk of history.

Everyone was getting comfortable patiently waiting for the story to begin. The crew that was on that night got help from the others that showed up so all closing procedures could be finished in time. The crowd had increased with new workers and some bartenders that hadn't been aware of what was going on until this past Sunday. There were 18 present.

Ed walked in and looked at the expanding crowd and asked, "Is somebody selling tickets?"

All laughed and sat there quietly. Ed began with "When last we spoke WW2 had just ended. The country was filled with joy each time a bus or train full of soldiers came home after a horrible ordeal. Times looked up. Between new industries and an expanding university, jobs were available. A hospital was built down the road about 15 miles. This was good for a couple reasons. Before this the closest hospital was over 70 miles away. The jobs created to build the hospital were good, but the jobs created to staff the hospital were even better. Winona became the Chief of Pediatric Services.

Meanwhile Jeremy was in his mid-forties as was Paul. They started with installing utilities and roads for the beginnings of the three fruit streets. They built a home on each street with 15 adjacent lots ready to be built upon. Wyatt was the driving force although he didn't like people. It isn't that he didn't like people he just liked animals better. He decided to get a broker's license and asked Lydia to get a salesman's license. As soon as two of three houses were ready to be shown they put an ad in the paper, put up signs and declared they were open for business. Jeremy anticipated a few families would show up mostly, just looking. That first Saturday 26 families came through and 5 bought. It was interesting that of the five, 3 bought the upgraded models. When Sunday arrived, Paul decided to show up to see for himself, what was happening. Lydia and Wyatt were ok at showing the homes, but Paul could talk the construction talk and make the customer feel like they were dealing with someone who knew what was going on. Four more were sold. Paul and Jeremy knew they needed more crews to build and more crew to extend the streets. There was a need for some serious planning.

Jeremy had shrunk the ranch activity to the point that it could be handled by the sheep site and the Harrison site and managed by Randall. There was room for one more street on the end of the original site.

At this point Dorothy hit a button on the computer and an image appeared showing the original 120 sites, 40 by 3 deep, of the land rush. The next slide took it down to the five sites with the railroad on one side ending with the Martinez piece complete with the Rusty Bucket. The next slide moved in even closer focusing on the Harrison site, the Sheep site, the original site and the adjacent site originally occupied by Brad and Cynthia. The front of that site is owned by Paul Jr. Paul had expanded his service station business to include four pumps and a convenience store. The next slide zoomed in even closer showing just the original site with the fruit tree streets at the end.

Each street could handle 24 lots on each side. There was room for 144 homes before you started to look for more land to develop, perhaps at the cost of the ranching operation. The other opportunity was building out Paul's site

with probably a like number. Jeremy and Paul agreed upon a method of computing profits. It was agreed that each lot had a value of \$1,500. Construction profit went to Paul without any involvement of Jeremy or Wyatt. There was a \$1,000 development fee that went to Jeremy. There was a commission of 5% of selling price paid to whatever broker brought the deal. That broker could and hopefully would be either Jeremy, Wyatt or Lydia. All development costs for roads and the like were passed into the cost of the house being sold. If upon closing there was additional profit it would be split evenly between Paul and Jeremy. Everybody made money. These fees were not out of the ordinary. Many small developers were bleeding their projects with fees that were twice or three times this amount. They started building more high-end than starter homes. For the next five years they build and sold over 27 houses per year.

Jeremy was still saddled with the family restaurant and all the other retail operations. He hated it. Duane turned into a good restaurant manager. It sold basically cow, pig, and lamb products. Everybody knew it was fresh because it came from the back yard. The adjacent meat market was making big money selling not only the regular product but also selling Restaurant Grade steaks and chops.

The general store thing was quaint but not a money maker. They kept the look but started selling antiques and other luxury items. Livery was no longer a business. Grainery was right behind it.

It was time for the father son talk with Jeremy and Wyatt. They got along well, Wyatt was always at Jeremy's side as he maneuvered the ship of the family business. The big issue was that Jeremy had created much and was a success. He wanted to slow down and enjoy a semi-retired life. For that to happen Wyatt would need to step up and take over the helm. Jeremy started the meeting with, "Well, are you ready?"

Wyatt knew where this meeting was going. He answered boldly, "Yes I am. Now I know that if I start doing some crazy stuff here that this new relationship would unwind."

Jeremy paused and then said, "Well it would really need to be crazy. I want you to have the reigns in your hand. I would like to know what your grand plan for it would be."

"OK, I think we keep providing residential lots as long as the market keeps buying them. By the way you should know that Paul and Paul Junior have already had this talk. Paul Junior and I agree with the formula that our fathers created for profits on residential development. I guess the big issue is what we should do with the rest of our land and existing businesses. I think Duanne and Randall are both doing good. The town keeps growing. I think we have two of the most valuable sites in all Big Rock. At some point we will need to tear down the store and livery but keep the restaurant and meat business. I think we should develop the rest of that original site commercially. It's big enough to support a food store, hardware store, drug store and other retail. I just don't know if the Town has enough population to warrant it yet. Same with the property going up State Street behind the restaurant. With the Harrison site and the sheep site we've got almost a mile of developable property. It's worth more than ranch land, or at least it will be. The good news is that we're not in a hurry. We can carry on like we are doing, getting all our zoning approvals and the like waiting for the Town to grow to where we can support some national tenants.

Jeremy was silently taking it all in. Finally, he said, "Damn, that was good. Let me see if I got what you are saying. Pick what's ripe. Lots. Keep doing what is working. Restaurant, meat and store. Plan and wait for the rest to come of age. Beautiful."

Wyatt responded with, "Yeah, there's enough money to keep you and Paul senior retired in Florida and Paul Junior and I making more than this family is used to."

Jeremy took his time and then said, "Son, you have wisdom beyond your years. I'm going deep sea fishing."

Duane kept managing the restaurant that kept getting busier. Randall kept managing the ranch.

Wyatt took charge of managing the management of that while keeping the real estate game going.

He had a great horse, drove a great car and ran a huge business. He was a catch.

He was too busy to attend all the social functions he was invited to. He really didn't feel the need. Paul got hold of him and said, "Friend you've got everything but a life. You need a woman."

"Oh, they seem like such a bother. I sneak over to town to get my horns clipped occasionally."

Paul said, "Well besides that being disgusting, you're missing the point. This family has always been about family. You are not getting with the program. I know someone you should meet."

Wyatt quickly jumped in with, "Oh no. I'm not going on any blind dates. The thought of that makes my skin crawl."

Paul came at him again, "You've got to get out. I'm afraid one of these days one of your sheep are going to look good to you. "

"God, that's more disgusting than a blind date. OK tell me about her."

Paul said, "She's pretty, she's smart, she's not overbearing and she's not frivolous. Her name is Mary. She is a war widow. She looks at going out with the same level of excitement as you do. You should meet her. Nancy is having a dinner party this Saturday and both of you are invited. Don't mess me up by not showing. You've got to be there or for some reason it will be my fault to Nancy. I don't want to hear any of that so be there."

"OK, OK, I'll be there. What's for dinner?"

"Please show a little more enthusiasm than what's for dinner."

Wyatt said, "I'll be nice. Don't go building anybody's expectations. I don't know if I'm ready to start seeing women."

Paul added, "Look Wyatt I'm the only one who knows that you are a great guy. Your social skills suck. People think you are all about the money, and you and I know that's not you. Just be yourself."

Wyatt concluded , "I'll be there. I'll be myself; she'll get bored, and this will be over." On Saturday Wyatt showed up looking pretty good. He was wearing a sports jacket with an open collar dress shirt and his shoes were shined. He shook Paul's hand and gave Nancy a hug. Paul was making the introduction as Wyatt broke in with "Hi I'm Wyatt. I assume they talked you into this in the same manner they roped me."

Mary laughed a little and then said, "Well they didn't use any weapons or threats, but it was along those lines."

Wyatt said, "Good now I know I'm not the only one. In spite of their efforts, I look forward to talking with you this evening."

"Me too."

The meal was excellent. The conversation spirited. There was a little shop talk about unit 44 getting the tile changed in the bathroom and the road crew working on Pear Street. Finally, Nancy said, "You guys can talk all that stuff during the 70 hour per week that you see each other. Now is not the time."

Mary spoke up with "Actually I was interested in what they were saying. I take it you sell a house with various choices for color of walls, what kind of cabinets and the rest. Then when somebody screws up and gives them a different color somebody has to go back and try to talk them into what they didn't ask for."

Wyatt spoke "That's horrible, yet an accurate description of what we go through. We always make it right because we have to make them happy if we are going to sell their friends and family but yes, if a couple shades off in the tile selection can be made to being ok then we save a couple hundred bucks and some time."

Mary said, "Hummm, trying to be honorable and efficient. That's nice."

After supper Wyatt and Mary went to the porch and a waiting swing. Paul and Nancy were cleaning up. Mary opened the conversation with "I take it you date as often as I do."

"If that means never, then you've got it."

Mary said, "You know our friends think we're hopeless. Maybe we are. My husband died three years ago. I hadn't seen him for a year before that. So yeah, I'm not used to dating or anything else that involves men. I work in an office about 45 hours a week. I go home to an apartment and my cat. I read and go to work the next day. I see my mom and dad about every other weekend. They live about 50 miles from here. Yeah, I'm pretty much a loser."

Wyatt responded, "Well meet the male end of your loser club. I chase big animals most of the day. I have found that they are about as smart as some of the people I meet. I then have to take meetings on how well or rotten a restaurant and meat market are doing. I really don't care but I can't let that on or the people that are running things will give up. I then chase the problems of the development business making sure I've got buildable sites for Paul to keep up with what is being sold. I guess the cowboy thing is destined to finish. That is why I ride the range a couple hours a day. The money is in the development."

Mary asked, "you don't need the money, do you?"

"God no"

"Then why do it?"

Wyatt begins, "My grandfather and his wife came out here for the land rush. They not only survived they flourished while so many around them failed. They were game changers. Instead of doing what everybody else was trying to do they started a bar/restaurant and general store. They hooked up with my uncle and began selling equipment that was on the cutting edge to make farming and prairie life easier. Amazing success.

My father developed the skills to run all of this and then married my mother who owned with her mom another site. By the way there is a story there that you should hear but staying focused on my family's continued success they had these businesses while still holding over 640 acres. It was too much for any one person to try to manage. He then divided the businesses with my uncle working the equipment sales and construction business and Gramma and Grampa running all the retail. My dad kept the ranching operation. That exploded when the government needed meat for the troops in WW2. He tended massive herds of cattle, pigs and sheep.

I can remember when we had the meeting about the government contract. I was almost 16. Dad was itching for

retirement. He wanted me to take over as soon as I was able. When I was 23 he saw that the demand for meat was dwindling but there was a need for housing for returning vets. So, not knowing anything about real estate he got in the business and built and sold over 100 homes.

Every step along the way each generation was successful. My aunt was one of the first female doctors in the state. Everybody in my family is supposed to succeed. I've got everything I need to be successful. I've got land, money and staff. I could use some more enthusiasm. My options are many and they are all good ones. I just can't get riled up over any of them. This sounds pathetic and it is. I have no right to complain."

Mary said, "You're right it is pathetic and have no right to complain. That doesn't change the fact that you aren't happy. Do you have any hobbies or outside interests?"

"Not really"

Mary said, "Well get some. How involved are your mom and dad?"

Wyatt answered with "Well they're here. Mentally they are retired and living in Florida where they bought a nice place. Dad actually bought a boat. Spent his whole life in Kansas and buys a boat.

Dad and I just had a meeting where he handed me the baton. I know how to do everything that is there to be done. My father and uncle think I'm ready, they are just waiting for me. Uncle Paul is doing the same thing with Cousin Paul. I think they have already done it. I can tell by these last couple months Cousin Paul has been in charge while his dad was on vacation. He's another Florida guy."

Mary continued, "OK, do you see the importance in what you are doing?"

Wyatt said, "Well I'm getting it done."

Mary pressed on. "How many people work for you?"

"I don't know, 10."

Mary tilted her head like she just heard something wrong, "Ten? The restaurant must have 20. You've got at least two construction crews of 7 each. You've got a meat market that's got to be good for another 6 or so. You've got a real estate office with four agents and a secretary. Some number of persons are pushing pigs, cows and chickens."

"OK I get your point. When you count it like that it is probably closer to 80."

Mary kept driving it home. "So, you've got 80 paychecks you are responsible for. You've built with Paul a couple hundred homes. Not houses, homes. You did all of this while making money for yourself. I think you will be honored with your father and grandfather on all your accomplishments for Big Rock. You need to start feeling proud of what you do so you can go and do even more. I know what you need. Your family have always been game changers. They always took another path then the people around them. You need a game to change. Can you think about what that might be?"

Wyatt kind of chuckled as he answered. "Actually, I have been thinking of something kind of new. I think I want to do some commercial developments. I want to build things I rent out. I want to pay for them with the rent of tenants and eventually end up owning them free and clear with the rent still coming in. The family hasn't done that."

"Yet. Like what?"

Wyatt began. I'd like to leave the restaurant and meat business but tear down that store and barn. I'd like to build a plaza right up to Peach street. Behind the retail I'd like to build apartments. If there is still a market I'd like to do the same thing on Paul's land."

Mary said, "Now you're thinking. Your face just lit up when you started talking about it. Your problem is that you don't like to run things. You need to create things. Most people don't think that way."

"Well, you know how to make a guy feel good. Maybe this dating stuff isn't as bad as I thought."

Mary said, "Don't worry we still have time to screw it all up."

Ed goes back into today mode. "Well, they didn't screw it all up. They continued going out and dad kept on building things. They kept the restaurant and meat market. They had the zoning they needed to keep the residential development going. My dad in the fifties began seeking a rezoning for all of the frontage, including Paul's site to commercial. He also petitioned the Town to rezone the frontage on State Street all the way through the Harrison site and the Sheep site to Office/retail.

In the middle of all of this Wyatt married Mary and my brother Henry was born.

The Town Fathers had received guidelines from the state of Kansas on "City Planning". This caused the City to hire a Planner to go over what Wyatt submitted. Through this back-and-forth negotiation my Dad lost almost all respect for Government people. Dad had to grit his teeth through years of numerous meetings on "densities, parking requirements, landscape requirements, environmental requirements". They finally accepted the amended plan. One of the things that the town was trying to accomplish was the elimination of meat processing. There had been some number of complaints about being allowed to process meat in Town. The term "Process" specifically meant starting out with a live animal and ending up with food. Everybody wanted food they just didn't want you killing animals to get it. They were willing to grant all kinds of things if part of the deal was to get rid of killing animals on site. The funny thing is my father agreed with them. He just didn't like being told what they can and can't do. That difference of opinion slowed everything down another two years. Finally, they came to an agreement that as soon as you start the commercial development of your property you will have six months to close down your "stockyard", a word used to describe the killing of animals, portion of your meat business.

Through all of this Paul and Wyatt kept building 20 to 30 houses a year. Randall kept running the ranch at a reasonable profit, Duane kept managing the restaurant and retail at a profit as well.

Ed continued, "It takes on a Zen kind of thing. Had they been given the zoning 8 years earlier they probably wouldn't have had the market to warrant a tenant to seek occupancy. By waiting the eight years, the town kept growing to a population worthy of inspection by national tenants.

Wyatt became an expert on "the Small-Town Argument". He could show how small-town people are used to driving miles to get what they want. Now he had permission all he needed was customers.

The family business plan was to keep all options open. The meat market business could well support a family. The restaurant certainly could as well. The niche they created was around Alma's BBQ sauce. They sold steaks, chops, ribs and chicken any of which could be prepared with "Alma's Secret Sauce" It was a simple menu but successful.

As soon as Henry was old enough to work he went happily to the kitchen. He loved cooking and everything about cooking. As was customary in the family all young heirs learned all parts of the family business. Once they have done time in all areas they could select where they wanted to work. Henry chose the kitchen.”

“When Henry was about ten years old I came along. I didn’t know it at the time, but I was a bit of a surprise, at least to my father. He had well made his plan to retire off rents coming in from buildings he created and leased. When I showed up it added some years on to his plan before he could escape to Florida like his family has done in the past.

When I was growing up I did stuff like most kids. Played baseball, rode my bike, you know normal stuff. I did get to go to the ranch to see the pigs and lambs. I got to learn how to ride a horse. I got to go out into the pasture where there were bunches of cows like a real cowboy. All the while I was doing this my dad was working on business, whatever that was and my brother was working in the kitchen.

I remember I was coming up on my tenth birthday when I was told we were having a party because brother Henry was going off to the war. I didn’t understand. I know my mom cried a lot. People were coming up to my brother and shook his hand saying good luck and the likes. Then he went away.

I remember watching the national news every night with my folks. Every time it showed a helicopter, mom would run to the tv to see if she could see the pilot. She never could. I guess my brother had turned into a pilot. That sounded like a fun job to me. My folks didn’t think so. It appears it was dangerous. About a year later Henry came home. He was wearing his uniform from the army. It looked so cool. He was carrying this big bag with all his clothes in it. Mom and dad sure were happy. Me too, I guess.

Ed broke even further away when he said, “Now it starts getting a little tough. I start telling stories about my immediate family. Yes, it is still history, but it sure seems like current events to me. The next segment begins with my brother taking over management of the restaurant. Duane decided to retire so my dad had to find someone to take over. To the surprise of all, my brother asked for the job. Dad thought he’d give him a go at it. You have to remember the restaurant was just a thing that existed in the family. Nobody got excited about it since the time of my grandfather.

Henry was incredible at running the place. He changed the menu and trained the servers in how to deliver good service. The place picked up and began making noticeable money. The family was quite impressed. Henry kept asking permission to make some physical changes along with some sweeping changes in menu and pricing. The family, specifically my dad was not ready to change what was now making sense.

Then some bad news hit. Paul senior died of a stroke. Paul was a well-respected man in the community, so his funeral service was quite a well-attended event. After the wake my grandfather Jeremy asked for a family meeting including Paul’s children. They had the meeting after hours at the family restaurant. Everyone thought that was appropriate. At the time I was about 14, my brother 24 and my dad 48.

Jeremy began to speak. “When you lose someone as close to you as I was with Paul it makes you think about the big picture. This family piece of property has served all of us well. I guess now is a good time to think back on those who came before us.

To Foster and Sarah who had the courage to step out in faith to become homesteaders, and Brad and Cynthia who left a lucrative job to join in on the experience. Paul and I were the next generation that tried to move the family holdings along. Now it is up to you guys. I’d like to hear what plans you have been thinking about.”

Although he had heard Wyatt's plan from a couple years back, he wanted to know and have others know his plan for the future. With that he looked over at Wyatt and said, "Son what are your plans?"

Wyatt began, "I guess the biggest noticeable change is the tear down of the original store and barn. If we keep the restaurant and meat business that are both making money and demolish the rest, I think we have an excellent commercial site for development. It is big enough to support a food store, drug store, hardware store with another 10,000 sq. ft. of other retail uses. I think we need to develop one more street at the orchard. This street could support another 52 homes but also be an entrance into the land we currently ranch. We could keep building houses for decades back there. The other new idea is to build apartment buildings, maybe 8 units each between the housing and retail. Similarly, the other end of the site behind the restaurant could be developed into an office park. Somewhere in here we will be diminishing the ranching operation to the point where it should just probably go away."

Jeremy said, "Well I can tell you have been putting some thought into this. What about the restaurant, meat business and supporting farm for support of the restaurant. Don't we still want to grow our own meat?"

Henry spoke up "Grampa, can I say something?" Once given the nod he continued. "I'm the only one in the family that actually likes the restaurant business. I've been managing it now for going on to three years. We are turning a nice profit. What I would like to do is convert the restaurant into a high-end restaurant and lounge. I have been studying hard on this type of operation. The closest thing we have to such a facility is the hotel 40 miles from here. The town has been changing. You can see it in the homes Dad and Uncle Pauly are building. It's no longer GI Bill starter homes. The Big Rock customer wants frills now. All the new industry down the road, the University faculty, and the hospital creates customers that want something nice for lunch and dinner. I think we are in position to deliver it. I've talked to Veteran's Affairs and they have money for guys like me to open a business. I would like to make serious changes to the building. I could pay for all that fit out with the VA money and become a tenant in your new retail center."

A silence came over the room. This young person is now talking like he really knows what he is doing. Everyone remembered Henry's military service and was impressed with him as a man. Finally, Dad spoke up, "Well son that's quite a proposal. Don't you want the meat business and livestock support for your venture?"

"No. I need a whole new look. If you are going to stay in the ranching business, I'd appreciate it if you moved it as far down wind as you could. At least the chickens and pigs need to go. Dad, I would think that a new fancy restaurant as an anchor for your plaza development would be a good thing. I'll be investing a couple hundred thousand dollars in major improvements. If I screw it up and can't pay rent throw me out and take over a building greatly improved from what you have now."

Paul said, "I think that is a great idea. Let me bid on the construction work. You know I've been telling my kids about our family. How we never do what everybody else does. We find something better and then make a success out of it. This is just another such example."

Grampa spoke up. "I love it. I can see the passion you have for your venture. If I understand it right, you aren't asking us to give you anything other than moving some livestock so your upscale customers don't have to smell chicken shit while eating your expensive meal. Son, if you concur with your son's idea, what could we do to help him out, at least in the beginning?"

Wyatt said, "Rent. In the open market if we were to rent to someone not family I could probably get about \$3,000 per month. What we actually charge him is totally up to us. We could step the rent for instance. Give him a break

while he is developing his business and then increase it over time.”

Grampa looked over at his grandson and said, “You’ve got the pioneer spirit son. Finalize your paperwork with the government and tell us when you want to change over. Keep running it along the way but when you close the doors to have Paul come in and build you out. Have a lease in place that gives you options way out into the future. Start with free rent until you open your doors for business. Then for the first six months pay \$500 monthly.” Grampa was looking around the room to see if he had agreement from other family members. When he saw the smiles he said, “Then your rent goes to \$1,000 a month for 3 years. Then you top out at \$2,000 thereafter.”

Everybody felt great at giving Henry a break that would help make him a success. The meeting moved on to finalizing the rest of the development issues. Jeremy asked if we were having any problems with the city for permits and the like. Wyatt said “No they like us over there. We must go through all the filings, but we know how. Paul and I are interviewing architects to lay it all out for both our pieces. I’m going to talk to Amos at the butcher shop. He might want to stay on as a meat market in the plaza. He could keep doing everything he is doing other than killing the animals on site. He certainly has a following. Dad, I’d like to thank you for calling this meeting. It’s good we all know what is going on with the family legacy. Before we leave, I’d like to propose a toast to Foster, Sarah, Brad and Cynthia who worked so hard to give all of us opportunities. Hear, Hear.”

Ed went back into conversation mode with “I think that was when the change hit with my dad. I was too young to pick up on it when it was happening but looking back that was the time when my Dad’s attitude and drive changed gears. Maybe it was that the focus of the meeting turned the spotlight on my brother instead of him. When you think about it, he had really accomplished a bunch of neat stuff. They were building houses at an amazing rate. All the other operations were at least making money if not doing a lot more. His plan that he rolled out was impressive, but it was his son that got most of the glory. After that meeting Dad got into the development business with a fire in his butt.”

As soon as the plan that the architect drew up was accepted dad went right at it. My brother’s VA loan came through and Paul got the bid to change the restaurant. The meat market guy decided to throw in the towel and retire. That was a blessing because the food store they got wouldn’t have come if there was a competing food operation on site. The citizens of Big Rock couldn’t believe what they were seeing. The For Lease sign went up and the solicitations began. Dad made up a flyer and bought a list of commercial customers and mailed it out. Over the next 2 years he got his Food Store, Drug Store and Hardware Store. When he closed Ben Franklin, he had a pretty well rounded retail center. Then he got the bank. Each of these tenants were ten-year leases. Only the hardware store came from one of his agents. The rest were his customers. He collected hundreds of thousands of dollars in commissions. He was on fire. Each victory fed his mind of what a great developer he was. He took on a swagger in his step.

It’s funny what money can do to you. Wyatt came from money. He always had whatever creature comforts he ever needed. This was solid old money. From the business he drew a comfortable salary. With the housing business he began to draw the developer fees, lot sales fees and profit per house money. That’s a different kind of income. It doesn’t come in weekly; it comes when it comes. It starts to feel like a Christmas bonus check, but with a couple dozen Christmases a year. With all these special “rewards” you start thinking you’re special. Then the mind game gets worse. Commissions.

Let’s say you lease a twenty-thousand-foot national food store, on a ten-year lease. Even back then the annual rent would be at least \$50,000. The commission on such a transaction would be \$25,000. That’s a pay day. With each one of those your ego takes off.

He built 2 eight-unit apartment buildings. Over behind the restaurant fronting on State Street He build a two story 8,000 Sq. Ft. office building. He didn't actually build it. He built the shell of the building leaving all the finish work to be done to the specification of the tenants. Put another way that means he didn't have to invest the other 70% to finish the offices until he had a tenant. He was smart. It took over a year to lease that one up. He noticed that the second floor was hard to rent. When he got it 80% rented, he built the next shell but this time it was a single story.

So my dad is walking around town like a big shot, thinking he's got the golden touch.

Meanwhile my brother's business took off like gangbusters. Everything on the outside was inviting and everything on the inside was elegant. He hired a chef from Kansas City who was great. He also hired his kid brother. He didn't really want to, but mom asked, he complied. I came on as a dish washer initially. I didn't mind the work. The next year I moved up to busboy that was better because the servers tipped you out. I saw Henry all the time at work but just said hello in passing. The next year I went online as a server some of the time. If we were busy, I was allowed to be a server. If there were enough servers, I got bumped to busboy or barback. If there was any favoritism, I didn't see it. The good part of being a server I had to learn the computer system that we are using here. I worked two summers in the kitchen. With that job I did all the inventory control including entering it into the computer. When I was working the kitchen or any other non-tip job he graciously gave me an eighty cents per hour increase in pay. So, my restaurant education was coming along much faster than my academic education. After six years of college, I finally graduated.

Keeping with a family tradition my dad put me to work with Uncle Paul for one summer. Again, I got all the rookie jobs. At least Paul was fun to work with. We'd talk while he was showing me stuff. I learned a fair amount about construction along the way.

Somewhere in here Dad developed some bad habits. I still think it came from the lack of praise he got while taking on the time intensive work of planning and permitting his development projects. He had piles of personal money from the commissions he earned in leasing out the plaza. He thought he was a big shot. He threw his money around and became a gambler. His drinking, gambling and my education were a big drain on his regular money. He didn't have to go into "Family Money" until he stumbled upon the deal of deals. One of his agents that he was accused of having an affair with came upon a multi- screen movie house as a tenant. We didn't have enough population to warrant a placement of this theatre complex. Dad was able to convince the tenant that if you look at the neighboring communities you have enough of a customer base. He convinced them by telling them that we who live in small towns know that we have to travel to get what we want. If you want to go to Home Depot you travel 13 miles to the East. If you want a Walmart you travel 16 miles to the North. We're used to it. If you build a multi- screen theatre people would drive 20 miles to catch a show. They bought it and signed a letter of intent. This is where dad made his mistake.

By now my Grampa had died and Dad held the reigns to the family holdings. Dad wanted to put together the deal of deals and show everyone how smart he was. Once completed, he wanted me to know just how clever he was. He called me into to his office for another one of those father son talks where dad knows everything and I'm a slacker. I've had lots of those. This time he wanted to teach me how to be clever in business. I sat there listening to him spout off on how smart he was in making this deal.

Basically, what he did was acquire two parcels. One was the Martinez piece and the second was the Rusty Bucket. He didn't tell either owner that he had the tenant in his pocket. Instead, he acquired the Martinez piece for some land speculators and the Bucket for his not so bright son. Gene will tell you he actually said it was going to be cheaper to get me a restaurant to run than pay for three more years of graduate school."

At this point he looked over at Gene. Gene responded. "Yes, he did. Dad made Ed out to be a little slow and unmotivated."

With that the whole audience started laughing. Ed felt a little proud that the crowd thought Dad's assessment was far from true.

"Being the neophyte young idealist, I suggested that if the deal was so good, why not give people what they were due. He looked at me like I was from a different planet. He was disappointed that I did not see the value in making more money than less.

So, he buys the Martinez piece for about a million short of what it could have brought to service the movie contract. He bought Gene out with terms that he would pay off as soon as the construction began on the movies and then change the place into the only restaurant in the parking lot of a multi- screen movie house. By the way there is no better location for a restaurant than right here especially if you are the only one. Movie goers can park once and have food either before or after the show. It's a steady stream of customers all day. Well dad didn't share that information with Gene or the price would have been higher or he wouldn't sell at all. Either way it was better for dad if these customers weren't aware of the movie deal."

Dorothy raised her hand and then asked, "As a realtor don't you have to disclose this information to your clients?"

Ed again, "Here is the other tricky game he played. If you are being paid a commission by the property owner for the transaction, then you are an agent and you must disclose everything. People don't like paying commissions. So, dad told both parties that there wasn't going to be a commission. In Gene's case he said this is just a friendly deal between us guys. For the Martinez land he said he was being paid by the customer for this and other deals he was working on. No commission, no need for full disclosure."

Ed could see people talking to each other. He asked. "I can tell you have some opinions on the transactions. Don't be shy. Speak up."

Donnie said, "Yeah I've been kind of arguing with Dorothy, I don't see anything really bad in what your dad did. She doesn't agree."

Dorothy popped in with, "Yeah, I think it's low life. Sorry"

Ed said, "No I agree. Dad made sure he was operating just within the legal boundaries, but I agree with you, I think it's low life. How about the rest of you guys how many thinks what my dad did was ok?"

About a third of the hands went up one of which was obviously not Dorothy.

Ed then asked Donnie. "So, you think it's, ok? Mrs. Martinez walked with a million bucks less that she would have. Donnie, you think that's ok?"

Donnie answered. "First, let me ask how much money your dad was going to make on this deal?"

Ed was surprised Donnie would ask. Oh hell I might as well talk him through it. "He was proud to tell me. First you have to know a little bit about real estate. This was a 20-year triple net lease. That means the tenant pays all expenses. Taxes, insurance maintenance everything. The landlord gets a rent check and pays a mortgage, that's it. Because dad saved a million on the land he had more than enough down payment to make the deal. He could make the deal, pay Pauli to build the building and have enough left over to pay off Gene plus drop another 100 grand in the bucket. The theatre was going to be 40,000 sq. ft. at a cost of \$30 per foot, or a million two hundred

thousand dollars. Dad was going to finance \$1,500,000 giving him an extra \$300,000. The rent was going to be \$1.50 per sq. ft. or \$60,000. His mortgage was going to be about \$25,000. So he was going to make \$35,000.

Donnie said, "That's a lot of money, I grant you but really it's only about three grand a month."

Ed looked straight at Donnie and said, "No Donnie that's 35-grand monthly."

Gene was first, "Holy shit!"

Everyone started murmuring. "You've got to be kidding me. That can't be," and the like.

Ed continued, "Plus a fully paid for and totally remodeled restaurant in the middle of the parking lot of a ten-screen movie complex. There were a lot of chips on the table. Knowing that how many would have done what my dad did."

A bunch of hands went up, and Ed said, "How many have your hand up now and didn't before?"

There were three.

"Well, I guess morality is based on how expensive it is. Look that isn't totally fair. I think many of you would have gone the right way if it was moving in real time in front of you. For me it was make the deal but pay Mrs. Martinez and Gene their honest share. Remember had he gone the high road he still would have the restaurant and a monthly check of \$25,000."

Donnie continued his argument. "Actually, she might have walked with a million dollars less than she could have. I've heard of people getting greedy and blowing the deal. Who's to say if she knew the movies were interested that she wouldn't have wanted 2 more million. And now nobody gets anything."

Elery spoke up. "I was originally on Dorothy's side here, but I think Donnie is making a good point. As it is she is walking away with a million dollars for a small portion of what her people paid \$10. She did OK. So what happened. How come I 'm not eating popcorn right here?"

Donnie jumped in again. "Your dad already owned the plaza, two office building and two apartment buildings. There must have been some serious cash coming in even before this deal."

Ed responded, "Well that is what we all thought. What we didn't know was that Dad had already refinanced most of the holdings. Dad and Mom always lived good. They drove nice cars and had just about whatever they wanted. I know he put in over six figures for my education. What we didn't know is that he gambled, and not very well. He took lots of business trips, each one had a casino at the destination. He quietly borrowed on all the holdings to keep up. This deal was going to change all that."

Ed continued, "The next part of the story is as bad. To build the theatres they needed a zoning change from the city. It's a five man vote. Dad had two in his pocket. He meets with the third and attempts to bribe him. The city guy wanted more than what was offered. So, dad paid up. They got caught. There was a scandal and it hit the newspapers. The funny part is that dad didn't need to bribe anybody. Everybody wanted the project. The sales taxes from a movie house are extreme. This would have been the biggest taxpayer in the county.

Then the surprise hit. When they were having the public hearing to pass on the zoning and building permit a short somewhat chubby guy showed up in kind of a park ranger outfit. He asked to address all gathered and was granted permission.

He declared himself as Todd Ently Director of Wildlife and Environment for the county. He said, "A Mrs. Martinez called my office and invited me out to her property. I did so last week. What I witnessed was extraordinary. Just behind her house way up on a lone tree was nested a family of White Owls. Extremely rare. She mentioned that she sold the property to some people that wanted to build a movie house. That can't be allowed to happen. They will have to build elsewhere. This rare species must be protected."

Back at the Bucket the audience started to cringe. Conversations started all over the room. After a couple minutes of chatter Karen raised her hand. Ed acknowledged, "Ed. Didn't your dad have a contingency in the contract that called for getting a building permit."

Donnie answered for Ed. "Huh, listen to you talking about contingencies, no he couldn't do that. Then she would know about the movies. So he just ponied up the money. Let me guess, same with Gene."

Ed started, "Yep he paid Gene \$75,000 in cash plus the note. So dad is in the deal with a million for the Martnez piece, \$75 grand for Gene, a bribe or two for another \$50,000 and some normal expenses for about another twenty thousand."

Karen asked, "Did he really have that kind of money?"

Ed said. "Well to pull off this deal of deals he further mortgaged everything else he had. That's the plaza, Apartment buildings and the office building. He also financed the balance of the family land. He knew all of that was going away. He became the disgrace of the family. He couldn't handle the shame. He killed himself."

Some of the crowd hadn't heard of Ed's father so this was a total surprise for them. Others had heard something but never really knew what happened. It was shocking to all.

Finally, Karen asked, "Who owns all this Martinez land?"

Ed paused for a second and said, "I think I do."

Silence

Finally, Gene said "You own it?!"

"Well kind of. It's the only thing left in the family estate. The only three people left are my brother, mom and me."

Even Leslie was shaking her head.

Ed looked up at the 18 with a casual glance and said, "Well, we are pretty close to current. There will be one more story, but it might be a month or so out. I'll let you know. I would appreciate it if you kept the information I shared confidentially. Especially as it relates to my Brother and Dad."

Everybody was saying. "Yes, you got it, certainly" and so on. Everybody started packing their stuff up to go home. Leslie and Gene went to the bar knowing that Ed would follow.

Ed walked up to take a seat next to Leslie as Gene was pouring a brandy. "Did I make you guys' mad tonight?"

Leslie started, "No, mad is not the word. Surprised, I guess."

Gene added, "Why wouldn't this have come up before?"

"I don't know why it should. It isn't like we are short of land for what we are doing. We are certainly busy enough to keep working hard to do just what we are doing. I thought once we are fully into football season, we can perhaps think about expansion. If we have the courage to take that on, I think I can get us a good price on land."

Gene said, "What do you mean expansion? What are you talking about?"

Ed responded near sheepishly, "I didn't think you guys would be mad about the land. I thought you would be happy. We've been kind of busy with getting the restaurant going. Real estate development hasn't been on my radar."

Leslie said softly, "Believe me we are not mad. And yes, it is good news. I guess the problem is that we thought we were all full disclosure with each other. Is there anything else out there that has an impact on the Bucket?"

Ed responded, "Other than I submitted a request to the city for topless pole dancers. No nothing else."

Gene joked in with, "Pole dancers huh? Who gets to audition them?"

Leslie said, "OK boys, pole dancers are a no. How about wet tee shirt night?"

Gene and Ed jumped in with, "Great idea, good thinking:

Gene then changed it up to being serious. "What do you know about the land?"

Ed started, "Well, that and Mom's house are the only things left in the family property. I've been avoiding what to do with it for a couple reasons. First, there is no shortage of things to do around here. Number two, working with the land kind of takes me back to a place I don't really want to go. I think my brother investigated it a little. He told me he found out some interesting stuff. We're supposed to get together for lunch to chat about it."

Gene said, "Any development would be good. More houses, offices, stores whatever would be good for us. We need to be successful if there is nothing but owls living there. You and your dad were right though. A movie complex would be a huge victory for the town and the Bucket."

Ed said, "Lets continue the dream and push this puppy to what it could be with or without movies. If we kept up like we are doing would you vote for an expansion and if so what?"

Leslie said, "You guys need help. I'm not talking staff. You both need your heads examined. Why do I always fall for the crazies?"

Gene was the first to defend, "Hey, we aren't ordering bricks yet, but I think it is wise to know how you would expand if you decided to expand. Ed what would you build?"

Ed said, "OK, let me get this straight. We are moving along like now with these kinds of killer numbers. I would kick out the outside wall in the bar and create seating for at least 150 and maybe 200. We would probably have a sliding wall to cut that space in two. That would make it easier to handle different size parties and let you roll out the size of the bar to fit the crowd for football. It's more fun to keep the fans bunched up a little. We would need another conveyor pizza station along with some of the stuff we already have in our current kitchen. Some things like making dough and chopping veggies could be consolidated but there would be some kitchen equipment expenses. I'm guessing about \$200,000 in total."

Leslie broke in with, "My god, you have actually thought this out."

Gene asked, "How much additional action would we need to cover this comfortably?"

Ed said, "Well it would be 2 grand a month for the mortgage. To generate that kind of profit to cover that note you would need an extra 5 to 6 thousand in monthly sales. What will you pop in here tonight?"

"Probably three thousand."

Ed said, "OK I know we don't have football all year, but we have other stuff. The playoffs in anything will draw a crowd. So, it looks like you need 12 like this with this space and the expansion space filled to cover your nut for the year. Well, you've got 16 Sundays, 16 Mondays, 6 Thursday night football, plus the playoffs and preseason. All kinds of other sporting events like March Madness for college basketball. So, you've got over 50 nights of which you need 12 nights like this to cover your action. How about banquets? We could work up a simple catering menu to augment the menu we already have. So, if they want chicken or roast beef, whatever we can prepare."

Gene said, "I guess the decision is what do we want to do. If we wanted to bleed this thing, I think there is enough action out there to justify the expansion. Do we really want to be that busy? I never believed we would be this busy. We never really guessed at sales when we were putting the shine on the bucket. Not in a million years would I have believed that we could drum up this amount of business. If we did, I never believed we could service them. That shows what I know."

Leslie spoke up with "I think there would be some wisdom in moving along as is for 6 months or so. If we find that the business is still there and we are almost bored with how readily we take care of it, then we should think out a plan for the future. But for now, let's keep moving it along."

Ed said with a smile, "I agree. Let's enjoy what we have created."

Three weeks later.

The trio were at the bar. Gene said, "I think we are settling in on how busy we are going to be. I think we are staffed right for each shift. Some days we might have too many or too few help, but for the most part we've got it right. Are we satisfied with that, or do we want to go and get some more?"

Leslie responded with, "I think we could handle more if we got them when we want. I don't know how many more we could serve on a football day or even Friday and Saturday night. We could probably promote something that creates business on our slower hours."

Gene said, "Like what?"

Ed said, "What's our slowest night? Tuesday, right? Are we willing to give up 10 or 15% to garner more sales? By the way we would be doing something good for our primary market."

Leslie asked, "Like who?"

"Families. What if we met with the PTA's in town and offered a fund raiser? We make Tuesday "Help Your School" night. We print up a coupon, no, a sheet of coupons and give them to the PTA's. They can make as many copies as they like. The coupon states that 10 or 15% of this Tuesday sale will be donated to whatever school is

participating.”

“Why do you keep saying 10 or 15%?”

Ed responded, “I’d like to go with 15% but I didn’t know what you guys would think of that. We’re clearing about 30% overall. This would cut that in half.”

Gene said, “Yeah, half on sales we otherwise wouldn’t have. I like it. If we get 100 customers that haven’t tried us out yet, I bet we would keep a dozen or so. What do you think Les?”

“I like it. Who should call the schools?”

Gene and Ed instantly had a finger pointing at Leslie. She said, “I knew that was coming.”

Ed then changed the mood a bunch. He became totally quiet with no expression on his face. He got down on one knee and took Leslie’s hand. By now Leslie and Gene knew what was happening. Leslie began to cry a little. So did Gene.

Ed asked, “Leslie, you are the love of my life and there will be no other. Would you honor me in being my wife?”

Leslie quickly nodded her head and said “absolutely” Ed rose, took her in his arms and kissed her.

Gene went into his happy dance thing clapping his hands and spinning saying, “Yes, yes, yes.” He then ran to the other end of the bar to the wine cooler and pulled out a bottle of champagne. He began opening it as he walked back towards the couple. Pop went the cork.

As he was pouring the champagne Henry came walking in the bar.

Gene looked up and almost yelled, “Henry. You knew this was going on.” Just then the kitchen door opened and the staff came pouring in all clapping.

Donnie was leading the kitchen parade. He said, “We’ve been waiting for Ed to pop the question. We were afraid you would say no.”

Leslie laughingly said, “You know better than that. I am thrilled.”

It was good we had a couple bartenders in the entourage. They began pouring drinks all around. Finally, Gene raised his hand to settle the crowd, and then said. “I have had so much fun working with Ed on this whole adventure of turning the rusty bucket shiny. You are so special, so gifted. Now to see you find happiness with the greatest woman who ever came through that door thrills me all the more.”

Henry then began his toast. “It took me a long-time little brother to appreciate what having a brother is all about. To be here to see you hook up with Leslie is great. Cheers.”

Cheers all around.

Then Ed said, “Listen everybody. There is one more announcement that my brother and I have.”

A brief pause then the two of them in unison said, “The owls are gone!”

