



**Question:**

"After coming out of such a traumatic experience as cancer at such a young age, what inspired you to undertake such an endeavor as starting your own business?"

**Answer:**

I remember a very specific instance in seventh grade school when I was drawing a pencil portrait of a girl in my school named Kathy. My science teacher (Mr. Grote) saw my drawing and called me up to his desk. I thought for sure he was going to take it from me as he asked me to bring whatever it was that I was drawing up with me. As I handed him the drawing, I thought I was never going to get it back. He looked the drawing over and immediately knew whom it was of. He complimented me on the drawing and asked me if I'd be interested in drawing a portrait of his niece who was a country music singer. He told me he would like to pay me for my efforts and to choose a price. I chose the amount of twenty dollars. It was the first time I had ever sold a piece of my work AND the exact moment I realized I could actually make money at doing something I absolutely loved doing.

Fast-forward five years later to 1985. As I'm lying in the hospital during my recovery, my nurse sat down and talked with me for a while as she always did before she left to go home. We had many wonderful talks about life, dreams, cancer and fears. There were always good conversations taking place when Nurse Carol was on duty. During one of those talks, she had asked me what I wanted to do for a living. What I wanted to be when I graduated. As I pondered my answer, a funny scenario came to mind... I thought, "Well, let's see... I can't really break-dance my whole life, so..." Reflecting on that last thought, I laughed a little as I said, "What I've always wanted to be is an artist. I have loved to draw for as long as I can remember..." but then I said, "I'll start working on that IF I ever get out of this hospital, that is." As she encouraged me that I was healing quite well and that the word wasn't "if", but "when", The next thing out of her mouth was that famous saying: "Well Timm, When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." I never really understood the power of that phrase until long after my cancer.

With the music of Melle Mel inspiring me in the background, I thought about what she said for the next few days as I was literally learning how stand up & walk again, I remembered back to that feeling I got when I actually got paid to draw that portrait for my teacher back in junior high. It was then that I realized that I could actually start my own business drawing for people. I realized that I enjoyed my teacher's reaction to the portrait (along with all of the positive comments I got from friends and family as I was drawing it) MORE than the actual money I got paid for it. After thinking long and hard, I took her advice. I opened my very own "lemonade stand".

Once I got the idea in my head to start the company, I then realized I would have to come up with a name for it. After struggling to come up with a clever name, I settled with what I thought was quite simple & self-explanatory... "Artwork by Timm". I drew some concepts for a logo and decided on something that represented what type of art I actually did. The logo became known as a simple cup filled with the art supplies I liked to work with most; pencils, colored pencils, x-acto knife, paintbrush and marker. The jar of tools sat just to the left of a round window looking out to a tropical scene of the ocean & palm trees. I just loved tropical places, so that was my little piece of paradise.

After getting released from the hospital, my mom took me down to Florida to stay with my grandparents in their motor home while I recovered from my surgery and waited yet another round of test results. She thought a good trip to Florida was just what I needed to get my mind off of the hospital and cancer experience. While there, we saw a guy airbrushing t-shirts at the beach. I was so excited; I went up and asked him what tool he was using, as I had never seen anything like it before. The feature I remember liking the most about the airbrush at first was that it was most like that of a spray can. I figured if I can paint with a spray can, I could most definitely learn how to use this tool. After telling me what it was and where I could get one, we headed out to the art supply store and I used all of the money that I received in my get-well cards to purchase my first airbrush. I remember spending about \$125 on everything the T-shirt painter told me I needed. My grandma was so upset that my mom let me spend all of my money on "a tool I would never use." I'm so glad she got to see otherwise. She became quite a fan of my work after all that fuss.

Once we got back to Illinois and settled in, I set my airbrush up and began to practice. I enjoyed it so much; I decided to add the airbrush as the final part of the logo. I registered my business with the State of Illinois and I was officially a self-employed artist at the ripe age of sixteen. The youngest member in both the Cary & Crystal Lake Chambers of Commerce. My first customer was a classmate named Martin who ordered an airbrushed T-shirt of him in his football uniform roughing up a few opponents. Martin ended up going to the NFL for a few seasons and to this day, still has a banner I airbrushed for him while he was playing college ball. Word spread fast through school, and soon I was busy painting shirts, drawing portraits, and enjoying the beginnings of what has become my lifelong career "making lemonade". I have encountered many, many challenges in my more than 30 years in business and often think back to the simple phrase that has made such an impact when the right actions were applied to it, "When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Lemonade"

