**Brian Banush**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I was born in Winnipeg in 1944. My parents, Kazys Beniusis was from Lithuania and my mother, Helen Allen was from Ireland. My dad started a second hand store which was very popular with the flood of immigrants arriving in Canada. He grew this business to 11 stores all while becoming the linoleum king of Winnipeg. My Mom was working for him when they met and wed. I worked in the store and went with my Dad when on his buying trips where I helped load the  |  |

furniture he purchased and learned the fine art of negotiation. He also ran an auction every week. Mom would record the sales and I would deliver the goods and collect. The auction facility being very hot in the summer brought out the entrepreneur in me. I started buying cold pop from a local store and sold it during the auctions. I also set up a used comic book stand and had a paper route.

I was working at a local drug store when I, at 16, bought a car, motor boat and trailer. My part time job in a grocery store paid for the car and an expanding life style. My father’s store and rooming house were in a rough part of town. Among the compensations, for me, was a house of ill repute behind us. I took many opportunities to talk to the girls while they, scantily clad, washed their cars on the weekends, much to my mother’s chagrin. I had friends who fell in with the local roughs and ended up in jail. Sports… hockey, football and baseball saved me from a similar fate.I started working for Burns Meats after leaving school, on the order desk. I was rewarded for devising a cost saving plan by filling in for a salesperson while he was on vacation. The thought of getting paid, commission based, on sales I promoted was exciting for me. I soon got a sales territory in Sault St. Marie. It was here I married, Diane, who had been introduced to me by a co-worker of mine.

After a year in the Sault it was off to Timmons where my two daughters were born. Next stop was North Bay where a third daughter was born. It was here that Hartz made me that proverbial “offer I could not refuse”. One year later we moved to St. Thomas where I became the district manager. We managed to buy a new car and a house in one day. It was in St. Thomas that my fourth daughter was born. I would ultimately rise to the position of Vice President of Hartz.

Giving up the cushy life and after much deliberation with Diane, I yielded to the desire to strike out on my own and “be my own man’. At 60 years old, with friends and family questioning my sanity I started a distributor and importing firm. With all my family’s assets on the line and spurred on by the constant fear of failure my company flourished until I was completely computerized and owning five warehouses. When I eventually sold out my company was, according to “Entrepreneur Magazine” in the top five fastest growing companies in Canada. At 50 years old and having racked up some four and one half million air miles throughout Southeast Asia it was time to spend more time at home.

Not quite ready for a rocking chair I did some business consulting. We also, moved to Delhi where we were closer to grand kids and our cottage in Long Point. I joined the Delhi Golf and Country Club. Diane and I travelled to Europe and Asia before tragedy in the form of a CVA that took her life at age 58. We had grown up together, raised a family and were enjoying the fruits of our labour, our family was devastated.

After being alone for five years and discovering that loneliness was everything it was cracked up to be, I met and married Susan Fenlon who was widowed three years earlier. The newly combined family now numbered seven kids and fourteen grandchildren.

Succumbing to the travel lust we travelled and travelled some more. When not globetrotting I play golf with a great bunch of guys in Woodstock.

Looking back over my life I realize have fortunate I have been; born in Canada, being able to say I have truly loved and been loved by two women and to have lived the “Canadian dream”.