The Castlebury Tales, A Frame-Story Of My Reflections On Organizational Dynamics Learnings

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Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics, College of Liberal and Professional Studies in the School of Arts and Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Organizational Dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania

Advisor: Janet Greco

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The Castlebury Tales, A Frame-Story Of My Reflections On Organizational Dynamics Learnings

Abstract
This Capstone is written in the portfolio paper format, and strives to synthesize key lessons learned over my three year journey as a Masters in Philosophy student in the Organizational Dynamics program at The University of Pennsylvania.

Main themes and key learnings are presented, supported and interpreted through a series of stories inside a larger story, the former being told in the style of *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer and the latter as a dialogue between an older man and his grandson. The stories themselves, included in the fictional title *The Castlebury Tales*, each exemplify a value/key lesson learned in my journey through the OD program. Key themes were selected through combining key themes identified during an exhaustive literature review and through something I’m calling the *PennVenn*, an artifact that identifies key themes from each course I’ve taken and where/how such themes overlap. A copy of the PennVenn can be found in the Appendix.

The *Castlebury Tales* are read by an older character to a much younger character. The younger character (the “grandson”) exemplifies the version of myself before I started my Penn journey in January of 2018; the older character (the “grandfather”) from the perspective of one who has had time to reflect on the value of his education at Penn. As the grandfather fields questions from the grandson or finishes an individual story, he takes time to reflect on what he has learned and experienced in life and it is here where supporting literature is entered into the Capstone. Diagrams in the Appendix serve to aid the reader in both the Capstone’s construction and as an aid to understanding the flow of the document overall.

Disciplines
Arts and Humanities | Philosophy

Comments
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THE CASTLEBURY TALES,
A FRAME-STORY OF MY REFLECTIONS ON ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS LEARNINGS

by

Daniel Castle

Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics,
College of Liberal and Professional Studies
in the School of Arts and Sciences
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Organizational Dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

2020
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A FRAME-STORY OF MY REFLECTIONS ON
ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS LEARNINGS

Approved by:

______________________________
Janet Greco, Ph.D., Advisor

______________________________
Sharon Benjamin, Ph.D., Reader
ABSTRACT

This Capstone is written in the portfolio paper format, and strives to synthesize key lessons learned over my three year journey as a Masters in Philosophy student in the Organizational Dynamics program at The University of Pennsylvania.

Main themes and key learnings are presented, supported and interpreted through a series of stories inside a larger story, the former being told in the style of The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer and the latter as a dialogue between an older man and his grandson. The stories themselves, included in the fictional title The Castlebury Tales, each exemplify a value/key lesson learned in my journey through the OD program. Key themes were selected through combining key themes identified during an exhaustive literature review and through something I’m calling the PennVenn, an artifact that identifies key themes from each course I’ve taken and where/how such themes overlap. A copy of the PennVenn can be found in the Appendix.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to many for their inspiration and support that culminates in this work. First, to my advisor Professor Janet Greco for the continuous support she provided to me during my MPhil Capstone and beyond. Dr. Greco is an excellent professor, mentor, and friend. Her love for storytelling has been a tremendous influence on me and my work, and my sincere hope is that such influence comes through in this Capstone. I want to thank Janet for her time, patience, motivation, and expansive knowledge that has helped form this work. I find it somehow more than serendipitous that the seismic change that surfaced the creativity that ultimately led to this work was the first class, of four, that I had with Janet (DYNM 616). Janet’s ability to inspire creativity and her pragmatism to remind me that I “only needed to write one Capstone” helped me refine and maintain my focus over the near year long process that culminated in this work. Janet has become a friend and mentor to me, and I look forward to continuing to work with her in some capacity for years to come.

In addition to my advisor, I would like to thank Professor Sharon Benjamin. I find it telling that although I’ve only had one class with Dr. Benjamin (DYNM 606), I felt strongly about working with Sharon as a reader in this process. Sharon is insightful and has a wealth of knowledge, and I appreciate the feedback she provided in helping me not only refine this Capstone but also to think about what’s next for me in the creative process.

This work would be a lot less polished were it not for the work of Ann Stevens, who edited this Capstone. I met Ann during DYNM 651, where Ann worked as a writing TA to Dana Kamenstein. Ann was tough on my writing, and I expressed my gratitude for
her being so. When Janet mentioned that my work would benefit from editing, I was not surprised, and Ann was the first name that came to mind. I know my limitations as a writer, and grammar has never been a strength! Perhaps, even this paragraph may benefit from Ann’s editing.

I’d like to think that the events of my life have all served a purpose that exceeds the creation of this work. For the people that have been part of the raw material that makes up the stories of my life, thank you. If this Capstone is read outside of the formal Capstone process and you recognize yourself in a story or reflection somewhere, it probably is you that inspired it.

On the subject of inspiration, I’d like to extend a sincere thank you to my closest friends and teachers in my life. To professors I’ve had throughout my academic journey but specifically to Brian Moroney, Vincent Biagi, Carol Valentino and the late William Cole-Kiernan I owe a tremendous amount of gratitude for your inspiration. To Neima Grandela, a woman who gave my mother a job and me, a teenage boy, her time for spirited discussions, a sincere thank you as well. Like the others who have inspired me in ways they may never know, Neima made me a better person through her kindness and her wisdom. I will make an effort to send you all a copy of this work so that you might begin to understand the impact you’ve had on me. To my friends, most of whom are all really named Mike, and the late William, “Billy”, Dall, you all know the impact you’ve had on me since this story is inspired by our baseball road trips, our impromptu shenanigans and our lifelong friendships. Thanks for making the choice each day to be a part of my life — for this, I am eternally grateful.

I do not believe any of this work would be possible without the fundamental
sacrifices my parents, Joann and Dave, made for me. Beyond the four years of Xavier High School they somehow afforded and which opened up nearly every opportunity I’ve had, they instilled in me the values of family, tenacity and hard work. For this, and for everything they’ve done, I am eternally grateful. I hope this work makes you proud and know that I love you dearly.

Last and certainly not least, a genuine thank you to my wife, Marissa, and our four beautiful children: Matthew, Abigail, Adam and Alexander. I met my wife in 1994 and she has been a part of my life ever since we began dating two years later. She has been a constant source of support throughout my life and I am a better person for it. Together, we are a strong married couple — one in many ways that is a union of opposites in true dynamic tension style. We’ve often joked that I tend to give her a nudge when she needs it, and she’s there to reel me back in when I’ve gone too far. Marissa has been supportive of my interest in enrolling in this program and often shouldered the extra load at home and with our kids while I attended classes or read through nearly 9,000 pages of material over the three years I was enrolled in this program. To my children, my hope is that one day, you too read this and begin to understand some of the things dad said or did. Know that I’ve always had the best of intentions and did my best in raising you. Know also that I learn from you each day. I enjoy our time together and love to watch you all mature in your own unique ways. Many of the characters in this work are known to you from our dinner table chats or from lazy summer days. My hope is that as you begin to find your imagoes and write your own stories one day that I will play a lead role in at least one of them.
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PREFACE

In *When: The scientific secrets of perfect timing* (2019), author Daniel Pink concludes his work with a phrase with which I’ve chosen to begin my own. On the last page of his work, Pink states, “Writing is an act of discovering what you think and what you believe.” After having spent several months writing this document, and several more compiling notes and gathering ideas, I couldn't agree more. Deciding what to write this Capstone about was far from an easy task. While I initially killed many of the original ideas I came up with, I wound up resurrecting many of them in one way or the other in the work I am now submitting. This Capstone chronicles my journey in Penn’s Organizational Dynamics (OD) program and attempts to document what I am taking away from the journey over the past three years. I have chosen to include a section on applicability for Penn OD students at the end in the hopes my experiences can help others. Specifically, it is my hope that those considering Penn’s OD program take the time to read this document and discover for themselves how the key themes of the program might benefit them in their careers and lives. For my fellow students, and hopeful future alumni, I hope this work inspires you to think creatively about the forms a Capstone can take.

At the conclusion of the main Capstone body, I’ve chosen to include additional notes about each story told. This section introduces the work of imagoes, a concept taken from the work of Dan McAdams (2006) and provides additional background information for the story told within *The Castlebury Tales*, the story’s inspiration, or both. McAdams (2006) defines imagoes as idealized self-concepts of who we are or who we wish to be and writes about how we can use imagoes to make sense of our lives, unifying the myths
and stories that make up our lives into a larger, unified whole. Think of this section as if they were notes from an Interview with the Author about what provided inspiration. A section on applicability for both myself and fellow students (both current and those thinking about applying) follows the supporting notes. A series of appendices provides supporting information on the process itself. I recommend that this Capstone be read sequentially, at least the first time around as the section on sources of inspiration includes some “spoilers”. I felt this section was important both to aid the reader in the understanding of the stories, as well as to document in some way how each course experience or selected text continued to refine my approach to, and simultaneously to understand the value of, my education.

I refer the reader to take a glance at Appendix C to start. Appendix C contains a map I created to guide me in the construction of the main body of this document. Constructed as a series of stories nested inside a larger story, this Capstone serves as a reflection upon the primary themes of my education at Penn. This document will help the reader understand and locate which portions of the unified text apply to the storytellers and which to the two primary characters of the work, grandfather and grandson. With an understanding of appendix C, you are better prepared to embark upon The Castlebury Tales.
THE CASTLEBURY TALES: CHAPTER ONE

The warmth of the fire felt good on George’s weary hands as he lay a fresh log on top. George loved the house he and his wife restored nearly fifty years ago, even if the stone tended to hold the cold intensely during the blustery winters in New England. Having restored the building from an eighteenth-century apothecary, the structure was original, but the decor was all Leigh, his wife’s, design. As the embers rose up the flue, the room remained comfortable. Nature had begun depositing snow on the area nearly a full five days prior, and George was thankful for the wood pile that stood adjacent to the stone hearth. George’s son, Thomas, had finished stacking what was left of the last cord before leaving on his most recent business trip just a few short hours ago. An architect by trade, Thomas owned his own practice and had spent the last several weeks helping his client design and build office space in the NJ/PA/DE tristate area and had recently gone on site to check the progress of the build. George surmised that at the current rate of consumption, he would have enough wood left until Thomas was scheduled to return, assuming the weather began to let up in the coming days as forecasted.

While George missed seeing his son given the infrequent visits Thomas made, he understood that between his work and raising his own family, time had become a commodity with each passing day. Thomas often left Frankie with Leigh and George when he went on these business trips. George often wondered who got the most out of such visits, he and Leigh or Frankie himself. George felt a sense of sadness come over him as he thought about how he and Thomas had parted ways earlier that day, arguing over something so trivial George couldn’t even remember what it was about any longer. He had planned to say something to Thomas when he returned in a few days to pick up
Frankie.

Frankie was a sweet child and reminded George of his own son very much. In fact, watching Frankie develop over the years, George often recognized parts of himself in Frankie as well. Curious and polite, Frankie had seemingly boundless energy. When he first arrived, Frankie enjoyed playing outside in the yard. Frankie especially liked exploring the nearly ten acres of property George and Leigh had steadily improved upon in the two decades that preceded their retirement. Now in their seventies, George and Leigh were not as active as they once were and the property was beginning to show signs of being overgrown. Some of the structures, like the pergola where Frankie’s Christening celebration took place just a few short years ago, were structurally sound but beginning to show the first signs of disrepair. George often thought it strange how quickly time went by — it seemed like only yesterday he too was Thomas’ age. Although healthy at his age, George had begun slowing down once Frankie was born, giving up some of his time traveling and putzing around in the garden to be with his son and grandson. He also took much needed time to care for his wife who had begun to show the first signs of dementia.

As with other times throughout his life, George began to realize the fragility, and eventual finality, of life. Both he and Leigh lived a life of no regrets, raising Thomas and three others while working full time. The family enjoyed being in one another’s company and often traveled together, making memories that yielded stories still told to this day. George had worked nearly forty years of his life and it was with mixed emotions that he retired from the local university he so much enjoyed teaching at. Ever the optimist, George knew it was the right thing to do when he retired, despite having enjoyed it as much as he did. The combination of the onset of Leigh’s senility and the
fact that Frankie was growing so quickly helped George make this difficult decision to slow things down.

“Come on, Grandpa — let’s go!” The sounds of Frankie’s voice echoed off the exposed brick wall in George’s study, snapping him out of the dream-like state he had begun drifting into as he waxed poetic about time gone by. Warm to the touch from the roaring fire, the heat of the brick was welcome on George’s hands as he used the wall to steady himself as he rose from his favorite brown leather chair, gifted to him years prior by his son, Thomas. Adjusting his well worn slippers until they fit snugly, George walked into the kitchen in the adjacent room. Frankie had just finished his latest snack — a warm chocolate chip cookie and a hot cocoa adorned with whipped cream and a mountain of marshmallows. George had promised to read to Frankie, mostly as he loved to do just that, but also because he didn’t much feel like going out in the snow again. “Coming, Frankie,” George replied, rubbing his hands together over the crackling flame as he shuffled past the fireplace once more enroute to the study.

Frankie was standing in front of a large bookcase George had built in the formal study. Shelf after shelf contained books of all types and sizes. Souvenirs of George and Leigh’s travels were interspersed amongst the books, as were pictures of George and family over the years. “Hey, that’s me!” Frankie exclaimed as he saw a photo taken of himself, Grandpa and his dad on a fishing trip last year. George remembered that weekend fondly, soaking in each minute as the oldest of three generations sharing a moment together. Family had always been important to George and this collection of photos, new and old, helped tell his story. As Frankie ran his fingers across the spines of various volumes in the grandfather’s library, he could hardly control his excitement at
what was to come.

Moving quickly past Grandfather’s textbooks and Leigh’s collection of Vegan cookbooks, yoga chakra collections, and glossy art books (she favored those of dancers in major US cities), Frankie appeared to have located something of interest. As George watched, Frankie hastily pushed a well-worn ottoman, patterned with red plush fabric embroidered with small white concentric circles and rounded walnut feet, over from the sofa. Taking one large step up onto the ottoman, Frankie stretched until every inch of his three-foot, eight-inch frame was elongated, placing the pointer finger of his right hand on the spine of a large book. Moving across the room to see what had caused Frankie’s elation, George felt a warmth beginning to grow inside him, different from that of the still roaring fire in the adjacent room. “This one!” Frankie exclaimed, his voice filled with excitement and his eyes as wide as the arches that led from the study to the well-equipped kitchen next door. “I want to read this one, Grandpa!”

As George’s fingers slid to the spine of the book Frankie had chosen, he realized Frankie had chosen a title he had not seen, nor read from, in many years. George reached for the book and wondered what it was about this title that garnered Frankie’s attention. Was it fate? Serendipity? Both had played a rather large role in George’s own life and as he lifted the dusty volume from the shelf, he couldn’t help but think about the parallels in Frankie’s younger life. “This is an interesting book Frankie, but it may be a bit tough for you to understand right now,” George said.

“Pleeeeeeeaaaaassssse, Grandpa. Please! It has my name on it — we must read this one!” Although young in age, Frankie was correct. The title he identified did in fact contain his name, at least partially. Frankie had chosen The Castlebury Tales to read
The Castlebury Tales was a volume of stories, about four inches thick. Written in modern English, the work tells of the adventures of a series of friends taking the final leg of a thirteen year journey to visit all Major League Baseball (MLB) parks. Set near Philadelphia, PA a band of misfit friends embark to see the Boston Red Sox play on home turf against the Phillies of Philadelphia. After learning that their flight is cancelled, the group turns to renting a van. From Philadelphia they drive to Boston but not before a series of chance encounters has them picking up five strangers before leaving the airport. En-route to their destination, each of the travelers tells a story, enticed by their narrator to tell a tale wilder than the last. The narrator decides who tells the best story during the three hundred mile journey and promises a piping hot bowl of clam chowder from Parkers Pub and a frosty pint of Sam Adams Lager to the winner.

As George thumbed through the pages of The Castlebury Tales, he was filled with memories: of joy, of sadness, and of curiosity about how Frankie would respond to the material. He wondered how Frankie would understand such content and how well he might sit for the stories it contained. Holding Frankie’s left hand, and the book in the other, George walked back into the living room to take his seat. The heat from the fireplace made him smile, and as he took his place in the brown leather chair, worn and cracked from years of use, he began to think of Leigh and her ailing memory. He thought of all the good times they had experienced together, times Leigh now began to have difficulty remembering; he was thankful for each day he had with Leigh. As Frankie climbed into his grandfather's lap, George pulled his favorite afghan from the trunk strategically placed to his right. Red, blue, and adorned with the logo of his alma mater,
the blanket was a perennial favorite of George’s and was part of the ritual he had used many times in the past before getting ready for an extended reading session. George enjoyed rituals, making the everyday feel special by giving them an air of ceremony. George had participated in many ceremonies over the years and had worked diligently to instill creativity and fun within the relationships he curated and in the interactions he had. George had discovered that ceremony helped people connect with their histories and share values, creating a sense of shared identity in ways other methods could not (Bolman and Deal, 2006).

“You ready for this, Frankie?” George asked.

“Yes!” came the excited reply. Embers crackled in the fireplace as George took a deep breath and opened the cover of The Castlebury Tales.

“Me too, Frankie. Me, too,” said George.
Laying the cloth bound book on his lap, George wondered once more what Frankie would take away from this collection of stories. The stories themselves were allegorical in nature, the larger meanings likely too advanced for Frankie at this point in his development. Concerns aside, George opened the work and began to read it aloud.

“Let’s go! We’re going to miss our flight!” Mike shouted. As we rushed towards the gate we realized we were perilously close to missing our flight to Boston. We had chosen a mid-morning flight thinking we would have sufficient time to let the traffic die down yet still be able to meet up at Chickies and Petes for breakfast. An accident on I-95 this Monday morning had shut the roadway down in both directions and parking at the Terminal had been its usual nightmare. Thankful to have TSA Pre-Check, both of us made it through security rather quickly. As we arrived in the boarding area about 15 minutes before departure, our hearts beating and lungs squeezing in and out like an accordion, we suddenly realized we were too late. “Damnit!” screamed Mike. “How can they not realize the entire airport was inaccessible for the past ninety minutes?” As he marched toward the ticket counter to complain, I could see the veins in his hand bulge. His grip around the soft brown leather handle of his carry-on looked about as far from relaxed as Mike is often found to be. “Excuse me — we have tickets for that flight,” Mike explained, pleading to be allowed to board.

“I’m sorry, sir, but the boarding window for that flight is complete.” Mike continued to argue with the airline worker for several minutes, backing off only at the threat of security being called over. In the process, we learned that all other flights to Boston that day were full and Mike had destroyed any goodwill our group of frequent flyers might have had. We were grounded in Philly. It was 10:30 AM, and we held tickets for a 7:05 PM baseball game at Fenway Park and no apparent way to get there.

Flight alternatives exhausted, we began thinking about other options. After commiserating for a few minutes, someone floated the idea of checking to see if a rental car was available. Mike and I simultaneously grabbed our iPhones and began calling Enterprise, Hertz and Budget for availability. Our momentary hope of making the drive and being in Boston on time was dashed as we all found that renting a car would not be an option. Frustrated, we hung our collective heads. The dream of finishing the MLB stadium tour (visiting each of the 30 MLB parks), a 12 year trip in the making, appeared as if it were over before it began. As I hung up with
Hertz, Mike all of a sudden lit up. “I’ll take it!” he said. “We’ll be there shortly - thank you.” A look of surprise on my face, I turned to Mike and asked, “What’s up?” Mike was excited and in a loud voice explained how Budget didn’t have any cars left but they did have a ten passenger van available which he dutifully booked. “Awesome! Onwards to Fenway!” I exclaimed, and Mike felt the same way. As we gathered our bags to head to the rental counter in order to continue our adventure, things changed yet again.

“Hey, dude!” someone yelled. “Hey, man — wait up!” I turned out of curiosity to see what was going on around me to find a man, about ten years my younger, coming towards me.

“Can I help you?” I asked, slightly perturbed as we were all eager to get to the rental counter and get on our way. The man, dressed in a Phillies jersey and red cap, began to speak.

“Did I hear you guys are headed to Fenway? Do you mind if I ask how you booked your trip?” I explained that we couldn’t rebook and had figured out an alternative plan.

“How? How are you getting to Boston? My girlfriend and I had planned to make the trip as well but now we’re screwed.” Seeing I had been detained by this stranger, Mike stopped walking forward, turned and returned to where I was.

Looking sternly at me, Mike exclaimed “Dan — what’s up? Let’s go! We have to grab this van before they give it up!”

“Van?” the stranger asked. “You managed to grab a van? Is there any way we can join you?”

My heart sank. I wanted to do the right thing and help these fellow Phillies fans out, but they were strangers. The look in their eye was one of genuine hope — a plea for help. Mike and I locked eyes and nearly in unison shrugged our shoulders. “Sure,” I said. “You can join us but we have to leave now! Do you have checked bags or just carry-ons?”

“Thanks, man!” the younger man’s girlfriend relayed. “We just have carry-ons and are ready to roll. I’m Carol and this is my boyfriend Bill.” Carol was a petite woman in her mid thirties, about five feet tall and full of energy. Bill on the other hand was a much larger fan — both in height and girth. With a scrawny goat-tee of speckled black and gray hair and a receding hairline, Bill’s arms (or Billy as Carol referred to him) were covered in tattoos, visible by the sleeveless Bryce Harper jersey he was wearing. Pleasantry exchange completed, we rushed towards the car rental counter, hoping the drama for the day would be over and we could get on with our plans. We couldn’t be more wrong.

Frankie adjusted how he was seated on George’s lap at this point. The youngster
pulled the blanket up a bit further, making himself more comfortable as his level of intrigue grew with each word. “This is great, Grandpa — I can’t wait to see what’s next!”

We made it about 200 feet down the terminal before our trip took another turn. As the group of four now waited for the elevator, we were approached by two men and a woman. Clad in Red Sox gear from head to toe, we prepared to take some flak from the fans of the rival team. In true Red Sox fashion, the Boston team had come off a fantastic season and were favored to win their division. Interleague games between the Phillies and Red Sox were not common and this was one reason the group was eager to attend and make the trek North. A man who appeared to be in his late fifties, early sixties led the trio down the hallway. At this man’s side was another gentleman, about five years his senior. Tufts of white hair peeked out of the side of his well-worn cap, like the feathers of a baby bird blowing in the wind. Dressed in a navy blue shirt with the iconic Boston B in red printed on it, this man looked stressed out. A step behind him was a woman, even older than the two gentlemen. This woman walked with the help of a small cane, conveniently wrapped in the tape used on a baseball player’s bat. Clad in a pair of red capri pants, David Ortiz jersey and red sandals, she seemed to struggle a bit to keep up with her travel companions. Together the three looked to be somewhere between my parents’ generation and even older. The elderly woman was the first to speak.

“Sucks about that flight being cancelled, huh?” she prodded. The group of us shook our head. “We have seats right behind the dugout for tonight’s game but no way to get there. Been a Sox fan my entire life.” As I listened to the older woman tell her tale of woe, two thoughts crossed my mind. One, that the elevator had been taking an awfully long time to arrive. Second, that I had to pee. Excusing myself as politely as I could I went to the restroom, telling my companions I would meet them at the car rental counter.

No more than ten minutes must have passed between when I bid my Red Sox friends adieu and when I arrived at the rental counter. Mike was at the counter, and Billy and Carol were grabbing a Coke from the vending machine. Keys in hand, Mike turned around and walked towards me. I’ve known Mike most of my life and I could always tell when something was up. At this moment, something was up. “We have a small issue,” Mike said.

“Issue?” I replied.

“Yea — seems our newfound companion Billy over there has a big mouth and mentioned to that Red Sox crew that we had rented a van and were headed to the game,” Mike replied.
“So what? How does that concern me?” I replied.
“You didn’t let me finish. Billy extended the van to all three of them. You weren’t here and I kinda felt bad for them so we said ok,” Mike replied.

A feeling washed over me at that point which I can best describe as agitated. “What the hell??” I muttered, trying my best to keep my growing sense of anger under wraps. “I’m gone for ten minutes and you add three more people to this road trip? Who the heck are these people??” Mike could sense the frustration growing in my voice, so he put his left arm on my shoulder.

“Listen, pal, it’s all going to be fine. Think about all the road trips we’ve taken over the years in the name of baseball. You’re the first to admit that these trips were never primarily about the game — it was about friendship and memories,” Mike continued.

As much as I didn’t want to admit it at that particular moment, Mike was right. We had done many of these trips in the past and I very much enjoyed the stories we often told for years following each trip. At this point in my life, I considered time to be the biggest constraint I wrestled with. I had worked hard over the course of my life, working for companies large and small, established and emerging and across various industries while raising a family. I had been a perpetual student of sorts, having completed two graduate degrees nearly two decades apart. My mind was on overdrive most of the time and in addition to my own family vacation each year, I looked forward to the annual baseball trip with “the guys”.

Getting a hold of my emotions, I paused for a brief moment before simply saying, “OK — you’re right. What’s another three people? Besides they look pretty harmless.”

“I knew you would come around!” Mike said. “Let’s roll!” So off we went, me and this merry band of six others.

As George turned the page to continue the story, Frankie jumped off his lap. “I need a snack, Grandpa — I’m going to go to the kitchen and ask Grandma to get me some fruit.” George smiled at the boy and off Frankie went. As George waited for Frankie to return, he thought about just how happy reading to his grandson made him. George thought about his own life journey, and how like the narrator of The Castlebury Tales, he had made so many acquaintances throughout his life, some intentionally and some through serendipitous encounters. George thought about where life had taken him
in his forties and fifties, a period that in reality was decades ago but felt far shorter as George was still able to recall vivid memories from these two decades. He thought about how different life was for him in the current moment, serving the role of grandfather to Frankie and husband to Leigh. His formal role as a teacher had ended just a few years ago and George often pondered that transition. He recalled the impact of Bridges and Bridges (2017) who wrote about transitions and how the space between the old and the new (the “neutral zone”) was real. The onset of retirement was easier in concept than in reality, and George had struggled with the transition itself, knowing that a journey of such type took time; alas, George was impatient (Bridges & Bridges, 2017).

Shifting gears ever so slightly, George began to think about how often he and Leigh had traveled, both as a couple and with their children, and just how many of his memories came from those experiences he had shared with others. A feeling of gratitude came over George. George was a content man, and one who realized early in life that gratitude was key to living a happy life (Poscente, 2006). He thought of the wise words someone once told him, to forever “be grateful for the things and people you have in your life. Things you take for granted someone else is praying for” (Goodreads, Marlan, n.d.). While he waited for Frankie to return, George added some new logs to the fire.

George was very familiar with the content of the book he was reading and fully expected he and Frankie would be there for some time to come. George knew the tales this book held and he reserved a special place in his memory for those like it. George knew also that in a unique way his telling of The Castlebury Tales to Frankie would leave a memory in Frankie’s mind as well. He hoped that by the time they were complete with the book, Frankie would have formed his own impression or sketches in his mind of both
the contents of the book, as well as the stories themselves (Duarte, 2010). George had learned this lesson himself earlier in life and as such started several collections throughout the home he shared with Leigh. The work he himself had undertaken on learning about story structure and meaning was impactful to George’s personal and professional life. He learned that storytelling as a skill gave him a chance to explore controversial topics, and that carefully crafted stories could be used to sway a group’s point of view about something (Kelley & Littman, 2006). As he thought about it some more, George also realized that stories had given him a new language, one he could use to help make order out of chaos during some of the more difficult times in his life (Kelley & Littman, 2006). While he enjoyed the art of storytelling, capable of relaying information in great detail, George knew that the real value in storytelling was far deeper: he knew it was about seeking and conveying meaning (McAdams, 1993).

George had learned to use stories to capture his emotions about a specific event in his life, attempting to genericize it so that its lessons could be far reaching. He learned that upon reflection even seemingly negative stories could take on new, more positive identities. He recalled the work of Parker Palmer, who, while describing an epiphany he had during a therapy session, relayed the power of shifting his gaze and refocusing. “‘You seem to look upon depression as the hand of an enemy trying to crush you,’ he said. ‘Do you think you could see it instead as the hand of a friend, pressing you down to ground on which it is safe to stand?’” (Palmer, 2000, p. 66). It was as if upon reading how Palmer had been so capable of turning what appeared negative into something positive that George’s ideas on the value of reflection had forever been changed. George’s moment of basking in the glory of his thoughts came to an abrupt end when,
with apple in hand, Frankie plopped down in his lap. They continued their reading.

As we piled our belongings in the back of the ten seat passenger van and then piled ourselves into the van, I realized I had yet to meet the three newest companions. Everything had happened so quickly; one minute we were stuck at the Terminal and now Mike and I were headed to Boston via passenger van with 5 strangers. I introduced myself, turning towards the elderly woman. “Nice to meet you — I’m Nelly,” she replied in a soft, somewhat broken English accent. The woman’s voice was demure and she spoke with a Spanish accent. “I’m Vinny,” said the man wearing the cap. “We really appreciate you helping us out — this here is Brian,” he stated as he motioned towards the last gentleman. Brian was two rows behind me and out of handshake range so he and I simply nodded. Introductions complete, we were on our way. Our first stop was at the WaWa closest to PHL. As driver, Mike had made the command decision as he needed water and snacks.

We exited the van and began to collect supplies for the journey. While I was browsing the chips, Vinny approached me and began to chat. “Hey, man — thanks again for allowing us to crash your party. We very much appreciate it.” I smiled in return, nodding my head before returning to the difficult task of whether Salt and Vinegar or Sour Cream and Onion would win out today. Pausing for just a moment, I seized the opportunity to respond to Vinny.

“Since we’re going to be together for a while I thought it might be nice to get to know each other. Do you think yourself, Nelly and Brian would be up for a discussion along the way to Boston? Maybe even tell a few stories?” I didn’t realize at the time that Billy and Carol were right near me, choosing a soda from the refrigerator case.

“Billy loves to tell stories — count us in,” Carol responded.

Vinny smiled and with a wink in his eye responded to Carol, stating, “We should make a competition!” Pointing to me, he continued, “As this guy seems to be the leader in this group, let’s let him decide who tells the best story!” I shuddered at the idea initially since I didn’t know five of the seven people in the van.

“I don’t know, gang — we’d need to see if everyone is willing,” I replied knowing full well Mike would be up for it. As we approached Brian and Nelly about the same, I thought about the serendipitous nature of the encounters we all just made. Here I was with six other people, strangers as a group with small pockets of friends/acquaintances amongst them. I thought about the readings from church just about 24 hours prior. Deacon Peter had spoken about the New Testament reading (Acts 6:1-7), about how “The Choosing of the Seven” took place. I thought about how each was found to be “full of the Spirit and wisdom”. We seven were an interesting group, one that cut across generations with Carol and Billy the
junior to Mike and I; Vinny, Brian and Nelly were about 15-20 years older. This could be fun, I thought. This could be enlightening, I thought. This was perhaps meant to be, I thought.

As the group re-assembled in the van, I asked Mike to hold up a minute before driving away. “OK, as some of you know we were throwing the idea around about how to make this drive interesting,” I started. “I like the idea and would like to make a proposal. Let’s use the time we have together, about five hours if Google is correct, to each tell a story. The story can be about whatever you choose, and in the end I’ll decide who tells the best story. Since we’re headed to Beantown and all going to the game anyway, I’ll offer a pint of cold Sam Adams Lager and a bowl of piping hot clam chowder from Parkers Pub. There are six people here and I only know one of you. I’ll let you all decide the order of the stories and will simply sit back and listen to all of you. What do you say?” As I finished, there was some discussion, mostly between existing groups of friends and some about the mechanics of the contest.

“Any kind of story goes?” asked Brian.

“Yes, anything goes but let’s try and keep it PG-13 since we all just met!” I said in return. At that, Vinny smiled, nodded and turned to Nelly.

“You think you can handle that, Nel?” he said. Nelly shot him back a look that told me perhaps these two have known each other for quite some time.

“Sure thing, Vin” Nelly responded. “Why don’t you start us off? Got something maybe Brian and I haven’t heard 100 times yet?” Nelly said sarcastically. Vinny appeared to be deep in thought for a moment. After a brief pause, his face turned a warmer shade of pink as a smile washed across his face.

“Oh, I got something — I just hope you got something better because I’m in the mood for chowder and that bowl is mine!” At that, Mike put the van into drive and pointed it North. We were on our way to Boston as Vinny began to regale us with our first story.

Before George could turn the page, eager to dive into the next chapter of the Tales, Frankie was gone. Attracted by the final rays of sun hitting the fresh powder in the backyard, he had made up his mind that there would be one more romp in the snow before supper. Leigh had stepped away from the stove and, sitting gingerly at one of the chairs in the dining room, began to help Frankie lace up his snow boots. The cold was tough on Leigh, and she had been longing for the warmer days to return ever since late September last year. “You ok in there, Honey?” George shouted. “Yup — fine, Dear,”
came the response. George took the opportunity to freshen up his coffee. Sitting at the dining room table next to Leigh, George watched as Frankie smiled once more, donning his winter cap before heading into the snow. “He’s a great kid,” George said. Leigh smiled warmly in return. Leigh returned to the kitchen to finish supper and George found himself alone at the table. Sipping coffee from a mug emblazoned with his undergraduate alma mater, George recalled his studies years ago when he was exposed to the worlds of psychology and philosophy. Amongst memories of Piaget, Freud and Adler one particular person stood out.

When discussing the meaning of one’s life, the founder of logotherapy Viktor Frankl said, “Happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue” (Frankl, 1962). George knew that if we were to believe our sources, we must seek to understand their origin. Frankl had been a significant influence in George’s life, having read his seminal work *Man’s Search for Meaning* as a young undergraduate studying philosophy and then again following his own brush with death in 2001. Frankl’s words resonated with George but only with the benefit of hindsight. George came to believe Frankl’s view in his own life, and as experiences continued to unfold he found it increasingly more difficult to reject Frankl’s hypothesis: happiness is not the result of pursuit, unless that pursuit is borne of conscious self-reflection.

Self-reflection had been a common theme through George’s life, in his formal studies and in the everyday events of life. As if the keywords *ways of finding meaning in life* had been entered into the Google engine that had access to George’s memories, George found himself scanning his thoughts at a rapid pace. Vince Poscente in *The Ant and the Elephant* had written that “before any creature can become a great leader to
others, he must first understand himself” (Poscente, 2006, p. 23). This prompted George to think about work he had contributed to the broader body of knowledge through platforms like LinkedIn over the years. Going back to his philosophy roots once more, George recalled the words of Soren Kierkegaard, who said that “life can be understood looking backwards but must be lived going forward” (Goodreads, Kierkegaard, n.d.) and of Sophocles who mused that the unexamined life was not worth living. The longer he sat at that table, the more George felt the sense of gratitude growing inside him.

As he leaned back in his chair, George continued to contemplate how experience in his life played an important role in the constant refinement of his worldview. From humble beginnings as a small child, George had accomplished much in his life. George grew up in a loving home with both parents and two brothers. George realized he was also quite fortunate to enjoy the company of some great students throughout his educational journey, some great co-workers and neighbors, too. He had shared his life with an incredible woman who was a near perfect complement to him and together they had raised four wonderful children, Thomas among them.

George was particularly grateful for the role of true friends in his life. Throughout their ups and downs, four friends of his from many years ago remained close today. While others had played cameo roles in his life, these four had remained true leading men. George had met all of them as a young boy in the Boy Scouts program, where the four camped and worked together. Three of the four were Eagle Scouts, like George, and they shared many life experiences together. The tight group of friends spent time together each year, reliving old memories and creating new ones in the process. Each was on their own path in life, some with families, others married without children.
None of the four friends had ever deserted George or had never not answered the call when he needed them; for those things George felt immense gratitude.

As he thought of all the experiences he had over time, he recalled the words of Tom Kelley, founder of IDEO. Kelley had made a reference to the Scouting program and the merit badges Scouts work to achieve throughout their Scouting career. Referring to the face of innovation Kelley defined as the experience architect, he had this to say about the role of experience: “The idea is that large groups of people, having climbed psychologist Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy [of needs] to the point where they feel they have amassed enough stuff [sic], are now collecting experiences [sic]” (Kelley & Littman, 2006, p. 207). Aside from the reference yet again to his psychology roots, George found this fascinating as he knew this to be true in his own life. He thought about how he and Leigh had made it a priority to give their family experiences rather than objects. George looked at such experiences as “story fuel” for his children, creating the bedrock they each would need to reflect upon as they began to write their own stories over their lives.

George knew that what you could achieve in life mattered much more than what you could accumulate (Kelley & Littman, 2006) and had credited his experiences and education, along with the practice of reflection, for reaching this worldview. Furthermore, George had benefited from this ability to create and tell stories personally and professionally throughout his life. George had always been a storyteller of sorts, but only came to understand the value of a well crafted story following his graduate studies at UPenn. George knew that unlike a report, good at conveying information, that stories enabled one to create an experience (Duarte, 2010). George had spent years weaving this idea into a tool he could use as a practitioner, but also in reflection. George’s epiphany
around the value of a well told story had helped shape his personal philosophy, and it was reflected in how he and Leigh had raised their children. In George’s mind, he knew that presence was far better than presents and as his children matured, George strove to model this philosophy for them. He thought about how on a trip many years ago to Germany he had found himself in the Dachau concentration camp. Memories of Frankl’s work had been foremost in George’s mind as he walked the hallowed grounds, and he couldn’t help but feel a stronger sense of connection to the work that had profound influence on his life.

Staring at the open fields of the camp on a blustery spring morning, George found a number of emotions stirring inside of him. Frankl had spent time in Dachau (Frankl, 1962) and George found an almost unconscious projection of Frankl on these consecrated grounds. He knew then that this experience of life would forever change, this experience shaping his view of the world. He thought of the words of Heraclitus, an early Greek philosopher, who remarked it was impossible to step into the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man (Badaracco, 2002). Such experiences helped to enrich George’s worldview in unique ways. Together with his studies and experience George’s stance (Martin, 2009) was continuously evolving. Although he did not yet have the vocabulary to describe what was happening, he later would come to understand that, “maturity demands the acceptance and meaningful organization of past events” (McAdams, 1993, p. 92). He would come to learn that “we create myth so that our lives, and the lives of others, will make sense” (McAdams, 1993, p. 92). George couldn’t fully understand precisely how what was occurring in his life made sense; it was only with reflection and the encouragement of others, that George’s worldview would eventually
come center stage. The more he thought of it, the deeper his reflection went. Could it be, as some educators have argued, that George’s choice of studies as an undergraduate, in his late teens and early twenties, contributed to his ability to develop his identity, providing George with the tools required to think critically about life? (McAdams, 1993).

Perhaps no gift during this period of formation was greater than the realization that George was largely in control of his own life, a realization that was most important to George’s mental health and resistance to stress (Bernstein & Rozen, 1989). George knew that many decisions in life would be difficult for him; he had learned this through his work in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) during his college years. He knew that often the choices he had faced were awful — who to let live and who not to focus on when he had responded to an emergency where the number of those injured exceeded his capability to care for them. Regardless, George had learned to be thankful for the experience, and grateful for his ability to have some control over the events of his life during times of volatility and uncertainty. Such early experiences would help George create a framework he could use when responding to the challenges life would present. George had reached a point in his reflection that had given him an opportunity to pause, and this was a good thing. As he began to rise from his chair, the back door opened once more. Leigh had called Frankie in for supper. Simultaneously exhausted and re-energized from his reflection, George walked to the sink, washed his hands and sat across from Frankie to enjoy the time together.
THE CASTLEBURY TALES: CHAPTER THREE

“Just a little bit longer, Frankie, maybe one more story before bed,” George stated. Frankie had finished getting ready to turn in for the night but was eager to continue the book he and Grandfather had been reading. Once more, George threw a fresh log on the fire as the night time air brought on a new chill. With Frankie on his lap, George turned the page to the first story in The Castlebury Tales.

The pitch looked fantastic this day, a deep green color with lines painted in bright white. As the players took the field for today’s match, all eyes were on Shawn. Shawn was the forward for the Albany Donkeys, a division one soccer team who had made it into the championships in the final week of the season by defeating their cross-town rivals. With the ball on his left foot, Shawn dribbled in and out of the defense with ease during practice, making the work ahead of him in today’s championship match look easy. Warm-ups completed, the teams took the field for the ninety minute finals match. It had been a long year and both teams were ready for this final showdown.

Shawn had always been a competitive player, one who rose from humble beginnings. Involved with sport his entire life, Shawn played the game of soccer (or football as he would call it, giving deference to the sport’s proper name) rising through the ranks of primary and secondary school teams before making it at the collegiate level. Shawn had ambition to coach football one day and was studying sports management and economics at the university. A star in his own right, Shawn didn’t get to the finals on his own. He had assembled quite the team over the past four years, surrounding himself with mostly like-minded players; there were few dissenters amongst the ranks and that’s the way Shawn liked it. There was no doubting Shawn’s commitment to the team and his willingness to play whatever position suited him personally. Shawn’s was a Cinderella story for sure, rising from that of team laundry and water boy from the start of his freshman red-shirt season to team captain. He had a number of opportunities come his way and had made the necessary sacrifices. Shawn’s
commitment to the team was far more influential than his abilities on the pitch, and for these reasons Shawn wore the coveted “C” on his uniform. Lacing up his boots, Shawn sprinted to the center circle to take the kick-off. The Donkeys had won the coin toss, and in true Machiavellian style Shawn argued with his teammates in order to get his way. With a flick of the foot, the game was underway.

The first eighty-ish minutes of the game were pretty typical. Both teams played aggressively given the stakes, and traded leads throughout. With less than ten minutes to play, the match was tied at 2-2. Shawn had played the entire match thus far, despite arguing with the coach about coming out given his apparent fatigue. Arguing was one of Shawn’s character traits, almost as if he enjoyed it as much as playing the game itself. Shawn often feuded with his fellow players, and colloquially had taken on the nickname “Coach” amongst his teammates. There was no denying Shawn’s individual abilities to develop his craft, but many had serious reason to doubt his ability to lead. Shawn was cunning, however, and was thus far able to convince the team manager, his true superior, that he could accomplish what had been asked of him. As the team was in the finals, there was some truth to this statement of course, but not for those who knew the real person wearing the “C” on the field that day. Shaking his head to indicate no to the manager’s request for him to come in from the pitch, and despite physical signs of exhaustion, Shawn continued to play on. The manager had subbed other players in on the fly to replace the weary and provide fresh legs, all of them carrying the message to Shawn that he was to come out. Shawn continued to refuse this direction, playing on in diminished capacity. It was clear to all but Shawn that his contributions to the team were waning, that he was becoming a liability rather than an asset. With time nearing the 88 minute mark, the fourth referee raised the illuminated sign over his head, indicating there would be four minutes of stoppage time added to the match. The screams continued from the sideline for Shawn to be subbed out but appeared to fall on deaf ears. Play continued as the clock ticked in the final four minutes.

An errant shot on goal meant that Albany had control of the ball and with it, the fate of the match. With 90 seconds remaining in stoppage time, Shawn called for the ball. 100 yards separated the Donkeys from the opposing goal and Shawn wanted to end this before any chance of penalty kicks could begin. The Albany goalie hesitated for a split second, surveying the relative positions of his players before kicking the ball to Shawn. With the ball on his foot and 86 seconds to go, Shawn began the long 100 yard run across
the field. As players scattered like mice under a flashlight’s beam, Shawn seemed determined to keep the ball himself, ignoring their pleas to pass. Sixty-eight seconds remained as Shawn neared the midpoint of the pitch as if he were a horse with blinders on heading straight towards the opposing goal. With less than one minute to play and 50 yards between the Donkeys and a game winning goal, all seemed well in hand for a fantastic finish.

“Shawn! Over here, I’m open!” called a winger on the left side of the pitch who had broken free. It had appeared the rivals had chosen to gang up on Shawn in order to stop him in his tracks. 37 seconds remained as Shawn approached the penalty arc of the goal. Victory was in sight. As he planted his left foot and swung his right foot back to take a kick, Shawn lost his balance. Crashing to the turf, Shawn somehow collected himself enough to swivel onto his back and attempt to side swipe the ball in a desperate move to keep the play alive. In doing so, Shawn rotated his body just enough that the foot of the opposing player, aiming to kick the ball with all of his might in order to send it as close to the near 80 yards his team needed, came crashing into Shawn’s head. In an instant, Shawn fell to the ground and appeared lifeless. The medical team was quick to rush onto the field and treat Shawn, evacuating him to the local hospital before the game could resume.

“I think he’ll be fine. Just give him time,” said the doctor from Shawn’s bedside. Shawn’s manager stood by his bedside, still sweaty from the pitch. He had finished the game and came to visit Shawn.

“What happened? Where am I? Where are all the others?” Shawn asked, his voice scratchy from what was likely irritation from the intubation tube he had in place for the past several hours that had recently been removed.

“You’re in the hospital Shawn — you were kicked in the head in the final seconds of the game and knocked unconscious. How are you feeling?” the coach asked.

“I’m in a bit of pain to be honest and a bit confused. Did we win?” Shawn asked.

“No, I’m afraid not; the game went to penalty kicks and we lost 3-2,” came the response somberly. “Shawn, I’m sorry you were injured but I must ask you: why didn’t you come out of the game all the times I called for you? I could tell you were tired but you simply ignored me and your teammates. I’m not trying to make you feel worse than you already do but frankly this is on you,” the coach stated.

Shawn thought about this for a few seconds, swallowed hard and responded by saying, “You didn’t make me listen, coach.
If you really wanted me out this was on you to get my attention, to
*make me listen.* Coach looked at him with a combination of pity
and rage, starting to respond several times but holding his tongue.

Finally, the coach composed himself enough to say, “That is
the dumbest, most selfish thing I’ve ever heard. I made every
try to communicate to you, each of which was ignored. You
can’t possibly push all of the responsibility for this failure off of
yourself. You’re not innocent here, Shawn! I’m sorry you got hurt
but perhaps that kick in the head will set you straight. You can’t
continue to conduct yourself the way you’ve been doing, going
about this life as if you’re perfect and others are to blame for your
shortcomings,” coach continued.

Shawn’s face swelled with tears, and as they streamed from
his face he mustered a response that must have been difficult for
him. “You’re right. I never realized how difficult I’ve been to deal
with until now. Maybe that kick was exactly what I needed —
maybe not what I wanted, but what I needed. I understand your
frustration coach and I’ll do my best to make it up to the team when
I see them next,” Shawn said somberly. The coach nodded in
agreement and turned to leave. Stopping at the door to the room,
he turned once more to relay his parting words to Shawn.

“Shawn,” he said, “I want you to know I appreciate the
willingness to finally take direction — to see that others sometimes
know better than you do. You’ve left a bit of a wake behind you
with your antics these past four years and you have some cleanup
to do. Before you go and talk to the guys about all of this, I want
you to also know that they’ve given you a moniker, and frankly it’s
one you’ve earned.”

With anticipation, Shawn sat up a bit in his bed, adjusting
the gown that draped his body. “What is it, coach? What are they
now calling me? Is it something good?” he asked. Shawn’s tone
had changed ever so slightly, a bit of the cunning that was the norm
in his line of questioning being replaced with humility.

“Shawn the Big Ass,” the coach said. “They refer to you as
Shawn the Big Ass, the Albany Donkey who wouldn’t listen and
blew the game,” coach said as he walked out. Shawn could feel his
body get heavy as he sank back into his bed. Thoughts of all the
enemies he had made fluttered through his brain. He knew he had
some amends to make, but that would have to wait. The swelling
from the hematoma on his head from the kick would need time to
recede. Shawn knew the road to recovery would be a long one, but
he was thankful for the second chance he had been given.

“How do you like them apples!” Vinny remarked as he reclined in
his seat. All of us sat with a combination of emotions on our faces. Brian smirked at Vinny’s story, appearing to indicate he had not yet heard this one before. Mike let out a loud, “That was great!” to which Billy and Carol nodded in agreement. The contest was on and by the looks of it was off to a great start.

“That was awesome!” yelled Frankie. “I play soccer too, Grandpa, and I always try to listen to my coach.” George smiled at the youngster, scooping him off his lap and onto the floor. “It’s time for bed now, Frankie — that was our deal,” George stated. With the boy’s hand in his own, George walked Frankie upstairs. After Frankie had brushed his teeth, George walked Frankie to bed, kissed him on the forehead and wished him a good night’s sleep. As he crept down the stairs, George noticed that Leigh had fallen asleep on the couch. Covering her with a blanket, as the fire had begun to die down, George sat next to Leigh. For the next hour or so, George would once again be lost in thought.

The Albany Donkeys story had launched George into a series of reflections. He saw the dynamic tension of two themes battling it out in his psyche. On the one hand, he felt pity for “Shawn the Big Ass,” as here was a man who ultimately failed not just himself but his team as well. In his stubbornness, the otherwise successful character in Vinny’s story could not see how his inability to change, to take direction, could be so harmful. On the flipside, if he looked long enough, George could find positive elements in that story, such as perseverance through difficult times and the role others could play in your success if you let them in. Not knowing where his thoughts would take him, George did what he often did at times like this: he poured himself a bourbon, neat, and grabbed a pen and paper.

George’s first thoughts were of Frankl once more. George thought about how
Shawn had a choice in this escapade, to acknowledge his coach and listen to the direction he was given. For reasons George did not know, Shawn chose to ignore them. George thought about how choice is in many ways what gives life meaning. Without something to strive for, people lose their sense of direction and stop searching for that meaning (Frankl, 1962). He thought of one of his most favorite quotes, one that still hung above his writing desk to that day: Teddy Roosevelt’s “Man in the Ring” quote from the early 1900s. How often he himself had preferred to be one that “spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat" (Roosevelt, 1910).

George knew that standing up for what he believed in, even if he were in the minority, was the right thing to do.

George had several opportunities throughout his career to lead and at times struggled with certain roles where his need to be liked was usurped by his desire to be respected. He saw in Shawn the ability to make the choice to be respected over liked, even at his own demise in the tale Vinny relayed. This unilateral preference for respect was truly Machiavellian in nature (Jinkins & Jinkins, 1998). George also knew from his experience that powerful people, like Shawn, were less inclined to want to hear negative or disconfirming feedback (Cohen & Bradford, 2012), preferring instead to masquerade as emperors enjoying their new clothes. Around the midpoint of his career George had a similar interaction with a superior, and Vinny’s story made such memories return front and center to his thoughts. George had also had positive experiences with superiors in his career and he treasured such relationships. In such cases, George approached the
relationship with his superior as one of partnership, not servitude, where both parties were on equal footing. When both were able to voice their opinions freely and openly, strong ties could be formed within the employee/employer dynamic (Cohen & Bradford, 2012).

Tipping back his glass to take a sip, George felt good about where his mind was. He was fondly remembering the specific relationship that was most partner-like in his career; but his recollection of how that relationship ended put a damper on the moment. George had only left one firm over the course of his career involuntarily, and it happened to be the time George’s superior was the best he had ever worked for. A merger between companies had made some staff redundant, and with that redundancy George was laid off. He thought about the stress that brought to Leigh and himself, about how they had worried about impact to their children more than anything else. George was able to find work in short order, and in the end the worry would turn out to be for nothing. In addition to learning about his own skill set and the love of his family, George also learned an important lesson about the positive value stress can have.

George had developed a high degree of stress hardiness over his life and appeared capable of flourishing in situations that would severely damage other people (Bernstein & Rozen, 1989). George was able to take the events of his life and develop abilities to control his reactions to them, largely by keeping his views on a given situation constrained to the purpose they might teach. George also learned to remain committed to the work he had undertaken and to new ideas. Through establishing the mindset that each obstacle faced was a challenge to be solved and not an albatross around his neck, George managed to parlay such events into positives. George was no stranger to stressful
situations; in fact, large turning points in his life began with them.

A warm Tuesday in September, 2001 was perhaps the largest stress hardiness event George endured. Thousands of lives were lost on 9/11 but many more were forever altered. The economy would stall as fears of war and retaliation replaced grieving. Shock would turn to sadness before giving way to anger and then fear once more.

George’s firm was directly affected by the attacks at the World Trade Center, their offices destroyed along with other offices, and more importantly lives, of others. George had narrowly escaped harm that day, evacuating from 2WTC with less than a minute to spare before his building was hit by a commercial jetliner.

The moments immediately following that blast were fresh for George, all these years later. These so-called “flash bulb” memories haunted him from time to time, but George chose to derive power from them, each time coming back to a desire to find meaning in life. George was able to recall the events of 9/11 in vivid detail and knew it served as an anchor for him (McAdams, 1993). George thought of the minutes following the crash that day, when as a trained EMT he had to fight the impulse to be a hero and not try to solve such a complex issue on his own or in an uncoordinated manner (Badaracco, 2002). Although George could not imagine the scale of devastation that was to come that day, something in him recognized that the situation was far from one that was in control and as if in an instant, he had made the correct choice to leave the scene. That memory too often haunted George in the years to come, as he thought about whether he might have been able to save one person had he stayed. He also knew that things could have ended much more poorly for him in the process.
George’s firm relocated into temporary office space about a month later and the focus had been around helping their clients recover. In many ways this was a good thing, as it provided purpose for employees to work, something very much needed by all who had survived the events of that day. Over the next 2-3 years, the economy suffered several challenges, the stock of George’s company took a dive, funding for companies dried up as the Internet bubble burst and with it George’s dreams of becoming a millionaire. Every stock option he owned was now worthless, but something in him didn’t really care. George was stuck in a loop of sorts trying to parse the events of that September day, of his life and ponder what was next. It was in this period that George read Man’s Search for Meaning for the second time and spent a lot of time thinking about his next move.

The wounds of 9/11 still fresh, George decided he no longer wanted to work in NYC. Along with Leigh, he wanted to move out of the NYC area and start the next chapter of his life. His million dollars was gone, but he had something way more important: he was alive. By now, he and his wife had also decided they wanted a family. George would stay at Sun three more years, finishing his MSIS degree and trying to understand his next move. Already fearful about daily commutes to NYC, George found himself stranded in Manhattan in the summer of 2003 during a large, extended East Coast power outage. He would take a job with another firm nine months later and moved south to work in Wilmington, DE.

At this point, George noticed his bourbon was about empty. With Leigh still fast asleep on the couch and more than an ember still present in the fireplace, George shifted his position and reclined his chair a little further. The events of 9/11 had changed him
forever. He was forced to question nearly everything in his life and take inventory of what was important to him resulting in the beginning of the end of his career driven life view. In the years that followed George often thought of Frankl and found himself often enjoying a moment (or longer) of reflection. He had learned that rarely did we learn directly from any specific experience, but rather we learned from the disciplined practice of reflection on such experiences instead (Jinkins & Jinkins, 1998). Having re-read Frankl’s work for a second time, George wrestled with how he (like Frankl) could live by accepting Fyodor Dostoevsky’s truth that a man can get used to anything when he realized he no longer truly needed any of the things he once thought he could not live without.

In the years that followed this event, George had learned to adjust the role work played in the formation of his identity. What was important to George in the work he chose as a young twenty-something seemed meaningless by his forties. The fancy briefcase he purchased now sat in his closet. This briefcase was a reminder of the days where George’s primary identity came from the work he did. It was the last vestige of his working days other than the watch, purchased with his first holiday bonus, that he had gifted Thomas upon his high school graduation. George felt it a fitting token to pass on to his son, not as a symbol of wealth but as a reminder of the value of one of the greatest assets in his life: time itself. As he prepared to rise and stretch his weary legs, George thought of the words of Robert Frost. In his poem, *Escapist — Never* Frost describes man’s pursuit of happiness in the following way:

His life is a pursuit of a pursuit forever.
It is the future that creates his present.
All is an interminable chain of longing.

Salzberg, S. (2013)

These words defined George in the early years of his career. The pursuit of what tomorrow can bring, the objects to be sought after and collected, dominated his time. This would all be replaced with the pursuit of meaning after that fateful day in 2001. Content for the time being, George headed to bed.
As George lay in bed, he found it hard to sleep. Having just re-lived the events of 9/11, George’s mind was very active. While content in where his life had taken him, there were several themes that still demanded George’s attention. Why was it so difficult to change, for the main character in Vinny’s story and for himself? Was conflict always required to force change? George knew that these were more like 7:00 P.M. topics for meditation, not 11:00 P.M. topics for whisking oneself off to sleep. George tried to dismiss his thoughts on such topics but was unsuccessful. After minutes of wrestling to get comfortable, George conceded defeat and sat up in bed. Propping the pillows behind his back and flicking the light on, George grabbed his diary and began to scribble words down on a blank page. Conflict. Change. Courage. George hadn’t intended for all of the words to start with the same letter, but he accepted it and began scribbling some more detailed thoughts.

George’s mind wandered to the times in his life where he faced conflict. The events of 9/11 were certainly one of the largest, but there were others as well. Something George had read years ago gave him a clue about a possible connection between the first two C’s on his list. George scanned his mental rolodex until he found it. “Without conflict there is no growth, and the most challenging conflict is within ourselves” (Poscente, 2004, p. 53). That was the link; conflict brings change or growth. He thought about Shawn in The Castlebury Tales story and envisioned how he probably just went about his days having his way with others, accepting no responsibility for his actions and in constant search of a scapegoat. George adjusted his seated position once more, and
was reminded he was alone in bed, as Leigh lay asleep on the couch downstairs. This brought back a very specific, painful memory for George.

George had been married to the same woman for nearly twenty years and they had four beautiful children together. George’s reflection largely brought back times filled with joyous memories of children, backyard BBQs, vacations, tender moments and the like — it had overall been a fantastic relationship. Like any relationship of this length and significance, however, it had not all been rosy. In fact, there had been some dark periods in their marriage.

George and Leigh had gone through the difficulties of having children in their relationship. Through prayer and science, they found themselves with four young children, all by the grace of God. Being parents of a five year old boy and three year old triplets — a girl and two boys — was all that we had ever hoped for and then some. It was a miracle to have children at all given their difficulties conceiving, in addition to the fact that George nearly didn’t make it home on that sunny morning in September, 2001. Life should have been grand and in many ways it was. George and Leigh were both exhausted by every definition of the word. George had been spending all of his energy working as Leigh was caring for a large, young family and a husband trying his best to make it all work. They spent all of their energy on their children who demanded it, and none of it on one another who needed it.

George had learned enough about navigating the challenges of conflict in relationships over the course of time, and was keenly aware of how, “people often attempt to circumvent the effects of structural conflict with great hope and optimism, which is usually followed by great disillusionment” (Fritz, 1989); George and Leigh
epitomized this idea. George had created an ideal scenario in his head about how he and his wife and were going to restore the relationship they once had. No longer able to be spontaneous, they would find that spark that helped them fall in love as college seniors, he thought. George made many plans about his future with his family, how he and his wife would spend time together when their kids went to bed, how they would travel the world together. The problem was Leigh didn’t share any of those plans, and George’s lack of sharing them with her surely contributed to this problem. Frustration became bitterness; bitterness became anger; anger became resentment. As their lives drifted apart, they remained united solely by their children. Wishing things would get better, days of anger became weeks and then months. At some point, George had decided enough was enough and a discussion was started. Frustrations were exchanged and in the end they both decided they had had enough of their situation and of one another. Their once happy marriage had become a convenient arrangement of cohabitation. They both wanted out.

As a Christian couple, George and Leigh both knew what divorce meant. It would be publicly shameful and sinful in the end. Neither one of them wanted to move out, fearing they would miss the children and concerned about the damage that might do. Neither one of them spoke much to the other, choosing to leave instructional notes for one another on the need to change the oil in the car or the fact that the insurance bill was overdue. George and Leigh stopped spending time together, choosing isolation and self-pity over love. Dark days ensued and spread for George like a virus into his work. Work had taken a turn for the worse for George and he no longer found his job interesting; George was spiteful over being passed over for a promotion.
Throughout this entire time, Leigh and George continued to attend mass on Sundays as a family. They listened to the readings, sang the hymns and dreaded the offering of the peace. How was George to say “peace be with you” to someone when he didn’t believe it? George recalled coming home from one mass one particular Sunday and deciding he wasn’t going to do it anymore — he was going to make a decision one way or the other. George was going to find a way to make his relationship better or end it once and for all. The hypocrisy of what he and Leigh were doing was too much for him to continue. George needed to understand once and for all where he stood with Leigh, and in the words of Maya Angelou whether I was a “priority of hers, or simply an option” (Goalcast, 2017).

Founded in Christian principles, Retrouvaille bills itself as “a lifeline for married couples” (Retrouvaille, n.d.) and a lifeline is what George and Leigh needed most. George booked a weekend retreat for he and Leigh after finding family to watch the kids. The drive to the retreat was awkward at best, filled with silence and a mix of hope and sadness. As they took their seats in a gathering space alongside ten other couples, George found solace in knowing he was not alone in the challenges he and his wife were facing. The weekend began with a series of discussions, facilitated by married couples who shared their experiences with difficulties over their own marriages. The Retrouvaille process taught George and Leigh how to communicate with one another in a new way—through handwritten letters. They learned of the “masks” that are worn throughout life, and how they are harmful to relationships. The Retrouvaille process saved their marriage and taught George and Leigh how to express themselves, a skill George never learned as a child and therefore was ill equipped to use as an adult.
Throughout the weekend George and Leigh would sit and listen to other couples discuss their challenges and build commonality with them, and then as a couple. Each couple would then write letters to one another individually before exchanging them and showing gratitude towards one another for what was shared. The topics grew in intensity as the weekend progressed, as did the amount of time allotted to the process. Thirty minutes became sixty and then ninety minutes until our final assignment Saturday night. We were told we would have four hours to complete this assignment. *Four hours? How in the world was I going to write for four hours?* George recalls thinking. Each participant was handed a slip of paper with a series of questions that had been carefully folded and instructed to not move past the first question until they had answered it fully.

As they headed back to their room, George opened his piece of paper, revealing the fold as instructed. There it was: “Question 1: Why do I want to keep on living?” What? Huh? This didn’t make any sense to George. He was in a marriage counseling session, not a depression/suicide watch program! Initial shock notwithstanding, George began to put pen to paper and to his surprise the words began to flow. Time seemed to slow down and before he knew it his time was up. George wrote for page after page about how he felt, how sorry he was to have kept it all bottled up and how sad he would be if he were not to be part of Leigh’s life, of their children’s lives. After they exchanged letters that evening, and cried a good long time together, George was able to recognize Leigh for who she truly was. George felt a sense of gratitude rising in him, and recalled being thankful for the authenticity and vulnerability they each expressed to one another.

As they left their weekend recharged and committed to not only one another but also to their children, George recalled feeling invigorated. They would do their best to
not raise their children in an environment where the only emotion they felt was anger. George had realized that anger had been part of who he had become, largely learned in childhood. Author Dan McAdams would describe such a feeling in a book George read as an *internalized object* for George, as “emotionally charged images [that] may become parts of the self, continuing to exert an unconscious influence on behavior and experience through one’s adult life” (McAdams, 1993). George and Leigh would strive to continue to show their children how they were proud of them, accepted them and loved them. They would create space for free communication and exchange of feelings and would endeavor to not put on masks for their children, encouraging them to express their feelings openly. George recalled reading something in the book *Originals*, where author Adam Grant described how surface acting involves putting on a mask to present oneself as unfazed (Grant, 2016), and he realized this is exactly what he had been doing. In an instant, George dropped the mask of being composed and unemotional and allowed himself the freedom to be authentic. In Frankl’s words George knew the time had come to let happiness ensue (Frankl, 1962).

It was now well into the early hours of the morning. The temperature of the house had begun to drop as the fire died down. Putting on his slippers, George checked on Frankie and added a blanket to his bed. He then proceeded downstairs to check on Leigh, covered her with a blanket and kissed her softly on the cheek. Adding a few more logs to the fire, George could feel the warmth beginning to return to the home. He marveled for a brief moment, thinking about the parallel between his reflection and his current situation. George thought about how the flame in his home had almost gone out, bringing with it darkness and cold. How with some effort, he was able to restore the
vitality and warmth so necessary for life. Now wide awake, George knew that rest would not come anytime soon. He had unpacked significant memories this evening following his reading with Frankie, and something still felt unresolved.

George’s mind wandered back to the events of 9/11 and Retrouvaille. Although starkly different in so many ways, George believed there was something in common between them. As he paced the living room floor he tried to place his finger on what that commonality was. At that moment, the fresh fuel George had laid on the fire made a loud popping sound. As if a sign from nature mimicking a snapping of the fingers, George found what he was after. Courage.

The requirement to have courage is what George knew was in common between the two flash-bulb memories he had unearthed this cold winter morning. George thought about how courage was not the opposite of despair, but the capacity to move ahead in spite of despair (Smith & Berg, 1997). George had shown an interest as an undergraduate student of philosophy in the existentialists, in the work of Camus, Sartre and Nietzsche specifically. George walked over to the bookcase and scanned the philosophy texts with his finger. After a brief time searching, George selected a title, and scanning the inside cover for his notes, turned to a page previously dog-eared. George found what he was looking for under a heading concerned with how to manage ambiguity in life. Nietzsche spoke about courage as the power of life to affirm itself in spite of this ambiguity, while the opposite of life was an expression of cowardice (Nietzsche, 1961).

George’s mental spelunking continued as he thought about the mythology readings of his graduate work. Common themes in such myths included acts of heroism to confirm death, and in doing so confirm life, as the two were a pair held in dynamic tension with
one another (Smith & Berg, 1997). What made such an act of confirming life in the face of death possible? Courage. This awareness of death, both physical in the case of 9/11 and emotional in the case of Retrouvaille, had inspired George to find courage. Courage to act. Courage to continue to find meaning.

Satisfied that he had found an answer to this immediate question, George checked on Leigh once more before heading back to bed. He was tired now, both mentally and physically, and was looking forward to finally getting some sleep. Alas, that would not be the case.

George lay awake once more now. He had found the source he was looking for in courage, but now he wondered where courage originated. George’s mind went back to his studies of Information Systems and Systems Theory and quickly found the work to describe the source of courage: equifinality. George knew that courage was not a one size fits all principle, that courage comes from different places. Recalling some of the materials he studied on leadership, George knew that sources of courage varied greatly. Religious beliefs, personal philosophy, role models, events that have tested us, values, self-esteem all had their place in helping individuals find courage (Chaleff, 2002).

George thought about times where he needed to display courage in both his personal and professional life. Specific ambulance calls George went on, the study of philosophy, and the impact of religion all had a part in helping George form and refine his values over time. This value system, coupled with what George felt was a Christian obligation to stand for justice, had been his moral compass.

George was a prudent man, who generally managed risk in his life rather well. He knew that courage, however, required him to raise his tolerance of risk from time to
time, as without risk courage is not needed (Chaleff, 2002). He thought back to Vinny’s tale once more of Shawn, the soccer hero that wasn’t, and connected that memory with so many experiences directly. Like the characters in Henri Nouwen’s The Return of the Prodigal Son (1994), George knew immediately that he had been both the coach and Shawn at different points in his life. He had renewed his vow then and there to learn from his past and not repeat similar mistakes. George realized that although his physical strength had waned over the years, his moral courage had steadily increased. He also had come to the realization now, at this early hour, that the confidence he had today, and the courage to take action during uncertain times, came from his life experiences (Poscente, 2006) and his willingness and ability to reflect upon them. Now thoroughly exhausted, and having reached a place of content, George was finally able to take some rest. As the clock read half past four A.M., George’s eyes finally closed, and feeling the warmth of the fire throughout the house, he was able to sleep at last.
The light of the sun reflecting off the fresh powder had found a way in through the shades on George’s windows. George’s late night had meant a late morning, and as he rolled over he glanced at the clock — 10:13 A.M. George couldn’t remember the time he had slept that long, and leaving the warm cocoon of blankets on his bed, he arose and walked downstairs. He expected to find Leigh and Frankie working on a puzzle, or perhaps baking cookies, but the home was quiet. George heard the faint sounds of laughter coming from the back yard which warmed his heart as much as the cup of fresh coffee warmed his hands. As he approached the back window that overlooked the yard, he could see Frankie running through the snow. Leigh stood under the shelter of the back pergola and watched, a smile on her face as wide as the drifts of snow against the back fence.

George relished the simplicity of scenes like this one. A creative ritualist of sorts, George believed in making home a place where people could gather to share time together, passing on the skills, attitudes and beliefs that made enjoyment of the simple things possible (McAdams, 1993). While raising his own family, George often delighted in teaching his children how to cook and to enjoy the outdoors via camping and hiking. George and Leigh had made sacrifices in their own lives for the betterment of their children, at times adopting old traditions and updating them to suit the needs of a given situation. George took a sip of coffee, and glancing at the images of Utah on his coffee mug remembered a trip the family had taken several years ago. The images on the coffee mug from Arches National Park were starting to fade, but the memories remained vivid.
and readily accessible. His mug now empty, George refilled it, and taking along a second cup with tea, he walked towards the door to greet Leigh and say hello to his grandson.

“Good morning, my Love,” George said softly as he kissed the cold cheek of Leigh, who stood in the doorway. “Nice to see you and Frankie on this cold, sunny day,” he continued. Leigh returned the gesture, and George could feel the cold of her nose as it touched his. George handed Leigh the mug of tea. “Warm up dear, I’ll watch Frankie from here,” George said, to which Leigh readily responded by walking back inside.

Leigh walked into the family room where the fire she had started several hours ago was still roaring. Removing her boots, Leigh plopped down on the couch and began to warm her feet. George returned his gaze to the backyard, and cupping his hands around his mouth yelled good morning to Frankie. Frankie stopped playing in the snow long enough to pick his head up and return a smile in George’s direction. Content with a sweater and hot cup of coffee, George remained in the doorway to watch Frankie enjoy the morning outside.

Watching Frankie play made George happy. As he watched a second snowman come to life at Frankie’s hands, his vision wandered past the garden in the yard. Leigh and George had set that garden up some time ago, and the fruits of their labor had continued to produce a harvest each season. George liked to think of himself as a gardener, having learned such skills in the latter part of his life. Charged with fertilizing soil and growing crops, the work was tedious but productive and the gardener must always be mindful of what he’s planted and how he’s caring for his crop. He must at times cut back weaker plants to give those with the stronger roots a better chance to thrive based on the limited resources he had at his disposal. The gardener must be
mindful to constantly weed his plot, removing those outside and unintended forces from diminishing his return, potentially choking off all that he had worked hard for.

Although the gardener did not plant such weeds, they still persisted in occupying space in that gardener’s plot, at times taking root stronger than the plants he intended. At harvest time the gardener enjoyed the fruits of his labor, but only if forces beyond his direct control (weather and pests came to mind) had been cooperative. Although he can wish some of these external forces away, the best the gardener could do was manage them; try as he may, the gardener cannot control them any more than he can control the thoughts in his head. In the end, the gardener can and should enjoy the fruits of his labor, taking the time to savor that which he has created in union with Nature. The gardener must attempt to bring something to life, operating in a space between what he can control and the natural elements he does not. He mustn’t dwell too much on the current yield, however, for the next season will soon be upon him and he needs to prepare for it. In the end, the gardener must toil today for the hope of something tomorrow but must recognize that tomorrow may never come. Each day the gardener strives for progress and growth—in his soil and, if he is wise, in himself.

George liked to think this way and was pleased with his creation of the gardener analogy. He wondered too if this paradigm, this framework, would work as well for leaders of teams and not just individuals. As the gardener did what he could to set the proper conditions for success, so too could a leader do the same (Hackman, 2002). George realized then and there that the true leader worries less about the cause of success, but instead about the conditions that make success possible. From experiences in his life, his education and his faith, George knew this to be true. If wisdom prevails,
the leader, like the gardener, will eventually realize he “cannot actually grow tomatoes, squash or beans — [he] can only foster an environment in which the plants do so” (McChrystal et. al., 2015, p. 225).

George had recognized this parallel that had played out his entire life as he and Leigh entered their forties. While they were actively raising their own children, George began to think less of himself and more about his children. He recognized the duality of his existence as one concerned not just with creating newness on his own but also with caring and sacrificing for others (McAdams, 1993). He recalled the words of Dan McAdams vividly, who, describing this duality George identified with, stated:

Biologically and socially, he creates a child in his own image, working hard and long to promote the child’s development and to nurture all that is good and desirable in that child. But he must eventually grant the child her own autonomy, letting go when the time is right, letting the child develop her own identity, make her own decisions and commitments, and ultimately create those offerings of generativity that will distinguish that child as someone who was given birth to in order to give birth in return.

(McAdams, 1993, p. 240)

It was, after all, George’s goal to be “strong enough to create legacies in [his] own image, wise enough to preserve the best from the past and carry it forward, and loving enough to offer that which [he had] created or maintained to the care of posterity” (McAdams, 1993, p. 240). George’s mind had drifted into the ether for a bit; the cold touch of Frankie’s gloved hand snapped him back to reality. “I’m cold, Grandpa—let’s go in,” Frankie said with rose colored cheeks and a smile whiter than the snow itself.
“Sure thing, kiddo,” George responded, holding the door open for Frankie to enter. George followed Frankie inside and began to heat water for a cup of cocoa, with two scoops of marshmallows just as Frankie liked it.

Mug in hand, Frankie joined Leigh by the fire. George would join both shortly, as soon as he finished up his bowl of oatmeal, just a few steps behind. The trio sat silently on the couch for just a few moments, each mesmerized in their own way by the flames crackling just inside the hearth. After a few moments, George asked Frankie how he wanted to spend the rest of their day. “Let’s read some more of that book,” Frankie said. George smiled warmly and nodded in acknowledgment. Frankie donned a sweatshirt, and finding the same blanket that lay in the heap from Leigh’s slumber, pulled it across George and Leigh’s lap. “Can you stay for a story too, Grandma?” Frankie asked of Leigh. Leigh smiled warmly, nodded her head and grabbed The Castlebury Tales from the end table, and handing it to George she took her place on the other side of Frankie.
The group was well on its way to Boston by now, having made great progress on the New Jersey Turnpike headed north. Still riding the laughter of Vinny’s story, the group of strangers began exchanging anecdotes about how they could relate to the main character. As the discussion began to subside, a brief moment of silence followed. “Great story Vinny, way to start things off. Who’s next?” Dan asked. As eyes darted around the van looking for a volunteer, Billy spoke up. “I’ll tell a story,” he said. The van appeared to breathe a collective sigh of relief as Billy began to speak.

The year was 1987. The view from the deck of the S.S. Dilly Ball was fantastic. The cruise had been a lovely experience for the four passengers who took part in the annual Atlantic Charity Adventure, or ACA. The ACA was an event sponsored by the Knights of Columbus at our local parish, designed to raise money for those less fortunate throughout the Diocese. The race was simple in concept — the first group of four to make it to a buoy that had been temporarily located 200 miles offshore and back to the marina would take home bragging rights and the silliest of trophies: a two toned silver contraption made of nautical items like oars, broken anchors and fishing lures crowned with a jelly jar depicting Grover from Sesame Street wearing a nautical themed hat. The crew of each boat had spent time volunteering in their communities, logging service hours to punch their entry ticket. The four members of the S.S. Ball had volunteered at camps for young men for the past several months, two weekends a month. It was there that they set up tents, fixed broken windows in camp structures, and readied the camps for those who would call nature their own for several weeks each summer.

The crew had reached the buoy after approximately six hours of cruising on this day, having set out just after 10:00 A.M. that morning. The weather had been ideal, in the low seventies with water temps in the low sixties—not bad for the month of May. Each of the companions had done their part to make this trip a success. Barry had prepared an awesome meal at sea of lobster, soft shell crab, and french beans in the galley below. Barry was the mechanic of the four on board and had traditionally served as cook, seeing as how the sailboat had few mechanical parts to maintain. John’s efforts ensuring the ropes the crew needed were in working order had paid off, as each of the two main sails worked without
even the slightest of issues. Frank’s role had been to ensure all the paperwork was in order so that the crew could enter the event and that the funds raised would in fact be donated successfully at its conclusion. Doug had done what he always did: he served as captain of the boat and as such chief navigator. Doug’s ability to read a map and navigate was second to none amongst this crew. Everyone understood their role and executed it flawlessly thus far. “What a beautiful evening this is going to be for our sail back,” said John as he took in the first shades of pink that began to paint the horizon. “Yes indeed,” said Barry as he lit the end of his second cigar and took a large puff. “Awesome job as always fellas,” he exclaimed, sinking back into the thick cushion on the chair at the stern of the sixty-two foot long vessel.

As the hues of pink on the horizon began to blend with magenta and danced with the final yellow rays of the sun, the crew of the S.S. Dilly Ball was content. The time was nearly 8:00 P.M., and as they finished their tenth hour at sea that day, they were looking forward to the next two hours of cruising that would take them back to port. They felt great knowing they had not only enjoyed their annual time together but they had raised money for a good cause. As they clinked glasses of champagne in a celebratory toast, Doug noticed darker skies ahead slowly replacing the kaleidoscope of light they had just had the pleasure of enjoying. Putting his fluted glass down on the deck, the color began to drain from his face, shades of pink slowly turning ash gray like the embers of the last campfire the crew enjoyed at camp. “Guys — we have an issue. We’re still more than one hundred miles from the marina and we’re about to get slammed by rain!” Doug said. As each member turned towards the bow, the gravity of the situation began to sink in. They were in trouble. Control of the ship was in Doug’s hands, but the source of its ability to move, the wind, was not.

As the Dilly Ball continued on, the size of the waves slowly grew. The boat and its crew were no longer able to fully control its speed nor its direction. The vessel, when under its own power, had not succumbed to the mercy of the waves. Now, all the time and energy they spent trying to keep their balance and illusion of control from being tipped over and possibly drowning (Nouwen, 1994) felt like a lost cause. Frantically, the crew began to talk at an increasing volume. “Grab the life jackets!” Frank yelled. “They’re in the cabinet down below next to the refrigerator!” he continued. Barry headed downstairs to retrieve the jackets, and was gone only a short time before returning empty handed. “The cabinet is locked,” he exclaimed, tension rising in his
voice like each wave that crashed into the bow of the boat. “Where
is the key?” he asked frantically as water began to come aboard the
boat and the bilge pump kicked on.

“All of the keys are in the compartment near the wheel, in
the helm!” replied John.

Already at the wheel and hearing the commotion, Doug
checked each and every compartment before responding, “No!
Nothing’s here!” At this remark, the rosy color in John’s face began
to be replaced with the color white in the now wind beaten sails.

“Oh crap,” John said. “We forgot keys under Frank’s cactus
plant,” he said next.

“What? What did you say?” came the response.
John repeated what he had said earlier, “We forgot keys
under Frank’s cactus plant.”

The crew had met up at Frank’s house around 7:30 A.M.
that morning. Barry had picked up the others and Frank was last
on the roster. As they had done in years past, the crew met for
bagels and coffee before making the final two mile drive to the
marina. As the boat belonged to Doug, he had the keys to the boat
on him and had laid the keys, alongside his phone, on Frank’s table
for breakfast. By 8:15 A.M., the crew had finished their meal and
headed back out to the car to ensure an early arrival at the marina
for final preparations. Frank had always had a habit of leaving the
keys to his house under a plant on the front porch, as he shared the
home with his sister Annie who often forgot her own keys, locking
herself out. As the crew was to be gone all day, Frank wanted to
ensure he left the keys in a familiar spot should Annie need them
during the day. The gravity of their current situation had reminded
the crew of this ritual as Frank reached into his coat pocket.

“Crap guys—these are the keys to my house. This means
the keys to the cabinets on the boat are on my front porch,” Frank
stated with fear in his voice. “We have no way of opening that
cabinet with the lifejackets, or any other cabinet for that matter,”
he continued. The once serene atmosphere on the Dilly Ball was
now replaced with genuine fear as the crew realized the seriousness of their current situation. Falling to his knees, Doug
began to pray for guidance and for safe passage back to port for
the crew. The others quickly joined in, as they recited The Lord’s
Prayer and three Hail Marys. Doug knew that they would need all
of the help they could at this time and he asked for the fortitude to
continue. Now was not the time to cast blame on anyone, Frank or
otherwise, for their current situation. Rather, it was time for
action. Looking around the deck, Doug found the dishes from
dinner being tossed about with all other items on the deck that day.
Amongst empty lobster claws and ramekins used for drawn butter, Frank found the crackers and mallets used in their meal just hours before. Fumbling through the cabinet that should have contained the keys, he also found a long straight screwdriver and a length of sisal. As he struggled to maintain the boat in the rising seas, he handed these tools to John and Frank, instructing them to go downstairs and break into the cabinet to grab the life jackets. Time was of the essence, so both disappeared below deck quickly.

After several minutes that seemed like hours, John emerged wearing a life jacket and holding two more for Doug and Barry. “Where’s Frank?” asked Doug.

“He’s still below deck — he busted up his hand pretty good trying to open the cabinet — I’m going to go help him out but I wanted to bring you these first,” John said. As the others donned their life jackets, John went back down to help Frank. Bandaging his hand with materials found in an adjacent cabinet, also broken into, the two men emerged on deck once more. The winds and waves continued to batter the boat as they inched ever closer to the marina. It would take two more hours before the crew would be met by a US Coast Guard patrol ship that had been dispatched to locate them. In that time, the men were in survival mode, barely able to control either the direction of their travels or of the fate of their lives. The site of the 150+ patrol both filled the four men with a sense of relief. As they boarded the patrol boat, they bid a fond farewell to the S.S. Dilly Ball. Years of good time on that boat were now over. As they sailed away under the power of the Coast Guard ship, they were relieved but also saddened as they watched the ocean take their vessel for its own. The Dilly Ball was gone but not the memories it had created. The four had lived, and with it a new tale was born.

“Wow!” Frankie yelled. “That was a great story!” George nodded in agreement, wiping a tear from the corner of his eye. “Why are you crying?” Frankie asked George.

“Oh no reason Frankie; just a sad story to me in some ways. I’m glad you enjoyed it however,” George said. Frankie hopped off George’s lap and ran into the kitchen with Leigh following.

“I’ll fix us some lunch,” Leigh said as she disappeared into the kitchen leaving George once more with his thoughts.
George chuckled as he thought of the craziness of how the foursome had gotten themselves into so much trouble on the boat. “We forgot keys under Frank’s cactus plant—hah,” George said to himself. He repeated the refrain several times while pacing the kitchen before writing the first letter of each word down on a scrap of paper.

*WFKUFCP.* George had seen this sequence of letters before, and he was now trying to recall where and when. As he thought about the story and how the captain never gave up, he was struck by his perseverance and in some ways, his courage. George thought about how both of those had been prominent themes in the tale told by Vinny just a few pages earlier in the book. He thought about how the captain of the boat remained calm under distress, assessing his situation and adapting to it, all the while maintaining responsibility for the safety of those on board. At no time did the leader of that boat look to cast blame on anyone, but rather kept his composure and addressed the problem head on. George admired that about the captain in the story, Doug. He thought some more about how he might have behaved in a similar situation, and about how Doug was a man of honor, of… principles. This recognition of principle was what George was looking for.

*WFKUFCP.* George continued to stare at that sequence of letters he had scribbled earlier. Doug was certainly *wise* in his actions in the face of the challenge he faced. Could this be the “W” George was looking for? Doug was also very *understanding* of Frank’s mistake to hide the wrong keys, given his intentions were certainly good. Doug showed tremendous awe in the power of God, leading the group in prayer as he assessed the situation. Could this be the “F” in his acronym — could the F stand for *fear of the Lord*? George walked back to the paper once more, and filling in the values for W, F and U as such he now knew what the rest of the letters stood for, and why they sounded
familiar. George recalled the time of his conversion from the Lutheran faith to the Catholic and how his preparation had him memorizing the gifts of The Holy Spirit. George knew the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (as detailed in Isaiah 11:1-2) were wisdom, fortitude, knowledge, understanding, fear of the lord, counsel and piety, or WFKUFCP!

George was pleased with himself for deciphering this puzzle of sorts. The more he thought of it, the more he could see each of these values in the men on that boat, tossed about in the storm. He identified with more than just these values, but with the notion of establishing principles by which to live his life. Earlier in life, George had identified such a need and immediately wrestled with the dilemma it presented. George knew that the world was not easy for a person of principle and likened it to something he had read years ago. George knew that “if you live in the vicinity of a dragon, it is wise to take his movements into consideration when making travel plans” (Jinkins and Jinkins, 1998, p. 5). George knew that trying to establish ideals without factoring in reality would leave him in a difficult spot in life.

George thought again about Billy’s story. What if he were to examine the context of the story less in terms of that of a sinking ship and instead of a last voyage amongst friends? Could this reframing of the same situation make a difference in how it was to be viewed? (Bridges and Bridges, 2017). Calling it the last voyage didn’t change the outcome: the boat very well may have ultimately sunk. It did however leave the crew, and George, with the notion of taking what they could from the experience (Bridges and Bridges, 2017). George was reminded of some of his own experiences with less-than-ideal situations, where there appeared to be nothing but negative outcomes. As those
events flashed in his memory, George realized he could spend time re-thinking each of those and find the positive as well. That would, however, have to wait as George’s thoughts continued to center on defining his own principles. George flipped the scrap of paper that once held the mysterious sequence of letters and, taking a cue from a crucifix that hung on the kitchen wall, began to write three principles on the opposite side of that scrap.

*Be Authentic/ Be Transparent.* This one hadn’t always been easy for George. In the earlier years of his life, George tended to hold things close to his vest, worried that those who might see him for who he was might not like what he had to offer. As his confidence improved over time, fueled by experiences in high school, college, and professionally, George began to drop the walls and remove the masks he had previously worn. Professionally, this sense of transparency helped George be more successful, while perhaps more vulnerable at the same time. When it came to presenting his ideas George learned that “being transparent moves your natural tendency of personal promotion out of the way so there’s more room for your idea to be noticed. The audience can see past you and see the idea” (Duarte, 2010, p. 214). In his journals and his writings, George learned to be more and more transparent over time. In his closest relationship with his spouse, this transparency had saved him and Leigh from the despair of separation.

While thinking about this idea some more, George remembered a class he had as a graduate student designed to help elucidate these concepts. He recalled creating a personal credo and personal coat of arms, and working up the courage to share both with his classmates, his team at work and with his family. His success in sharing these
artifacts with others reinforced another concept for George: it was best for him to define a style that worked best for him, rather than trying to mimic someone else (Hackman, 2002). Knowing what he was and was not good at was also important for making George a successful leader throughout his life. He knew that what often limited a given organization was the level of competence in those that led it (Jinkins and Jinkins, 1998). George had experienced many such failures in leadership over his career, and had learned that it was better to eschew talking about values at all than to talk about X while living Y (Martin, 2009). The irony of George’s desire to be transparent in his dealings even in ambiguous and tumultuous times was not lost on George either. Rather, he recognized the tension this often created for him and how easy it would be to hide his true self from the world when times were tough.

**Be Vulnerable.** The sharing of the artifacts from George’s class reinforced in him the importance of being vulnerable. It was, however, a moment from high school years prior where this principle began to emerge. Born to loosely Lutheran (*read* recovering Catholic) parents, faith played a small role in George’s early childhood. Often dropped off at church by parents who did not stay for services (“God knows we are busy” was the offered excuse) George was initially confused about the role of faith in his life. Church became an obligation that took him away from a giant bowl of Fruit Loops and re-runs of Bugs Bunny on Sunday mornings. He did not understand how something could be so important to him but not to his parents.

At the ripe age of twelve, George took a train each day into Greenwich Village, NYC to attend a private, Catholic (Jesuit) US Army all boys high school. To this day, George still can’t imagine how his parents felt about his taking the local commuter train
to 14th Street and 6th Avenue each day or how they managed to afford it. Regardless, he made the most of the academics, the military program and the camaraderie of the teenage boys he called classmates. Amongst humanities, math and military history George attended religious classes each week. Unlike 99% of his classmates, George took an interest in the religion classes, as it was all new to him. Several times each semester he attended mass at the church connected to the school. At first it was a bit awkward, as George did not know the words to any of the prayers nor the normal cadence of a Catholic mass. As time progressed, however, he began to get used to it—so much so that he became conflicted about celebrating a Catholic mass on a school day, followed by a Lutheran service on a Sunday. George struggled with his faith identity, and eventually stopped going to church on Sundays, having made a successful argument to non-religious parents about how school was teaching him what he needed to know.

Months turned to years at Xavier and as a typical, moody, teenage boy George became difficult for his parents. He excelled at being sarcastic and giving his parents the cold shoulder. George’s parents were (and still are) loving people but showing emotions was never a thing for them or for his family; outbursts of anger would be the only exception to that from time to time by George’s exhausted father. Riding the train each day to NYC had taught George independence, and the taste of freedom was sweet. He often spent weekends in Rockaway Beach, Brooklyn or the Bronx with friends. He was fifteen and knew it all; in many ways George began to see parallels in Frankie at this point in his young life. George’s home life grew tense over the years, and when the opportunity presented itself for him to go away for a weekend retreat, George jumped all
over it. “Two nights away from my house and parents and surrounded by friends? Sign me up!” George remembered thinking.

As retreats go, George’s senior year retreat was probably formulaic. Group gatherings started with prayer, progressed to discussion and inevitably came down to several common themes: what are we going to do about college, why do we not have it all figured out at 17, and what role our faith and family played at home and in our lives. George made his contributions as the opportunity presented itself and felt a sense of relief when the frustrations with his folks were echoed by fellow classmates. A break in the retreat was announced, and, feeling refreshed, George remembered heading back to his room. Upon opening the door to his room in the retreat house, George remembered finding a letter on his pillow. Thinking this was instructional in nature, he casually opened it. To his surprise, George found a handwritten letter from his mother. Memories of this event were making George emotional again, in the way a touching memory can.

The letter was four or five pages in length and contained nothing but positive words and messages from his parents. Although written entirely by his mother (George’s father has atrocious penmanship and barely finished high school), the letter detailed how happy his parents were with who he had become — how he had done well with “their investment” in him, funneling funds from savings to pay for his education, and how incredibly proud they were of his being awarded a scholarship for college. George recalls becoming immediately overcome by emotion, tears rolling down his face. He recalls thinking, almost in anger, about how his parents could feel all of this and why would they not say anything all these years? Why had they gone through the past 3 years of difficulty with one another if this is how they felt? George never forgot the happiness
he felt that day, but also the bit of resentment that went with it. *Why not conduct yourself daily like this?* George remembered thinking. *Why not be open in your praise or in your approval of what I did?* George recalled the sense of relief he had when he rejoined his classmates only to discover each had experienced something similar. No longer afraid of the reaction to his emotion, George found himself embracing others.

High school turned to college and as George continued to explore his faith in a Jesuit university, he made the decision to convert to Catholicism, as it had been the primary faith he identified with and actively chose to participate in. Participating in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is where George would first learn about the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Jesuit ideals of *cura personalis* and *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* were alive in him back then as they were today. Studies in philosophy and theology were exciting to George; while many of his classmates did not choose a similar path, George was grateful that he did. George always looked back fondly on those years of study and recalled how the principles he developed had guided his life from the major decisions through the seemingly mundane. They motivated George to pursue philosophy, aided him in the decision to marry Leigh (and subsequently reconcile with her), helped him process the events of 9/11 and gave him hope in difficult times both personally and professionally.

*Be Yourself:* George had possessed a unique set of skills and experiences. His choice of a liberal arts education and his focus on faith as bedrock helped shape how he viewed the world. George’s life experiences in times of trauma like September 11th, Retrouvaille and in the experiences in dealing with coworkers, bosses, and clients over several decades across multiple industries had helped George identify what he really
cared about, and how to maintain calm in the face of various crises (Badaracco, 2002).

George’s diverse experiences had enabled him to develop an instinctual ability to sense “the complexities, nuances and uncertainties” around him and had developed mechanisms to work through them (Badaracco, 2002). After years of living in an idealized state of the world he himself had fabricated, George learned to be himself, to take advantage of his experiences and education to make a unique contribution to the world. George learned to stop assuming others shared his values and stopped trying to convince others to adopt his (Grant, 2017) and instead learned to relate what he was trying to accomplish to the values of others. George learned to be direct in how he dealt with challenges in his life, not to talk around a problem but to confront it head on.

George recalled how nervous he once felt when a co-worker senior to him challenged him openly in front of a vendor. George defended himself as best he could during the meeting by remaining silent, later confronting the man in his office afterwards. George was out-tenured, out-titled, and out-networked, but none of that stopped him. He had mustered the moral courage to confront this person and tell him how he was out of line. He also knew that choosing to say nothing instead of going on the defensive would force the other person to go “deeper into his Dinosaur Brain,” according to something George had recently read (Bernstein & Rozen, 1989). George recalls a heated discussion with that man and how their relationship changed for the better after that. They didn’t always agree with one another, but they respected one another. George couldn’t help but believe that the events of his life had continuously shaped him in the same way a pebble is shaped by the waves of the ocean over time, the same ocean that had nearly swallowed the four passengers in Billy’s story in The Castlebury Tales.
As George walked back into the living room, he noticed Leigh was working on a puzzle with Frankie. After checking in on both, George walked into the study, past his familiar chair while continuing his reflection on the *S.S. Dilly Ball* story. Having finished his discourse on principles, George turned his attention next towards the captain of the story, Doug. George thought about how Doug had led his men through a difficult time. As before, George wondered what he would have done had he been in a similar situation. Before returning to his favorite leather chair, George grabbed a book from his bookcase. *Leading Quietly* was a book George read in graduate school. Written by Joseph Badaracco, this book was both insightful and impactful in helping George formulate and articulate his personal leadership strategy. It was Badaracco’s book, and the discussions in the class where this text was used, that taught George the importance of compromise. George learned that leaders were not just people, but rather were “heads of organisms” and that “leader and organization respond to one another at an almost cellular level” (Badaracco, 2002, p. 167). George learned the importance of compromising, and often used Badaracco’s own language to teach others about the concept, citing the author when he stated, “It is usually better to build some kind of house than to allow the perfect house to remain forever rolled up on the blueprints” (Badaracco, 2002, p. 157). George had learned that the world was far from perfect, that decisions that had to be made were rarely black and white in nature, but varying shades of gray. He had learned to become someone who embraced the complexities in life and as a result found himself “more likely to succeed at difficult everyday challenges than individuals who try to airbrush away these stubborn realities” (Badaracco, 2002, p. 35). George had learned several
techniques for dealing with a world full of volatility, uncertainty and complexity and had ample opportunities to put them to good use.

George’s familiarity with tools such as equivocation gave him the confidence he needed to tackle difficult challenges he faced. Drawing on moral courage, George knew that the willingness to “take moral action of any type in full knowledge of its attendant risks is the mark of significant development as a human being” (Chaleff, 2002, p. 178). George had to make such difficult decisions throughout his life, and did so knowing that his principles not only supported it but in many ways demanded he do so. George’s faith meant that he believed in a higher calling. Together with the support of his family, the courage to act and the willingness to be vulnerable and transparent in communicating what he believed in meant George made quiet leadership his personal style (Badaracco, 2002), and he did so unapologetically.

George recalled the time he was vocal about not wanting to work for a certain leader in his career. George found the man unethical in his dealings, and did not approve of how he conducted himself. To test whether these differences were with an individual or with the organization’s natural evolution, George confronted his boss’ boss, asking for his entire department to be moved. George had prepared Leigh that if he had fallen out of step with the organization’s values that he was going to resign his position (Cohen & Bradford, 2012). With small kids at home, this represented a risk, but it was one George felt strongly about. He was unwilling to work in an organization or for a leader who he did not respect, and whose values were not aligned with his own. George won that argument and his team was relocated inside the organization. George has taken a calculated risk, being perhaps a bit more transparent and vulnerable than his manager
expected (Cohen & Bradford, 2012), and it paid off. George would spend four more years in that firm before leaving for a new opportunity.

George would continue to refine his personal leadership strategy throughout his career. Blessed with working alongside several experienced leaders, George tried to assemble his own leadership philosophy by incorporating the best of those around him. As his career evolved, George took on more and more responsibility. At times an individual contributor, and at others a global functional lead with 70+ people reporting to him, George had a wide variety of experience to draw upon. The leaders George adored the most, and learned the most from, were those that specified end-states for deliverables but not the detail required for such a state to exist, those who provided “sufficient latitude to take the actions needed” to achieve said end states (Hackman, 2002). George used this concept to formulate his own leadership principle known as “fuzzy vision”, where he would paint a picture of where he wanted to take a team or function at some point in the future.

George found this method of “fuzzy vision” enabled his teams to excel at the given task, giving each team member the space they needed to get the job done. The extent of George’s management at the task level would be to set interim goals along the path, milestones by which to gauge progress and make any needed adjustments. Along with making commitments to such goals publicly to other teams in the organization, George would also envision how the lives of those his work would change would be impacted (Pink, 2019). George preferred to operate in such a way that “his words about team direction [were] always just a bit ambiguous” (Hackman, 2002, p. 86), as he knew
this would create the kind of environment where groups could deliver outcomes successfully.

Like other areas of George’s thinking, his attitude on leadership evolved over time as well. George learned to appreciate that leadership need not be provided from the top of an organizational chart. He learned that those who improved a team’s structure, or provided direction or coaching, were displaying leadership (Hackman, 2002). This insight changed the meaning of George’s graduate studies at Penn, creating a shift away from a future where George worked in organizational development and towards a direction where organizational dynamics could be layered on top of other fields, enhancing his leadership effectiveness regardless of the title he held or the relative location of his name on an organizational chart. This change in framework was fundamental to George’s continued success, as he was now able to provide insights in a way that was unique and unrivaled by his peers. George’s career would undergo a transition after more than two decades, as a merger would force George out of a role he held in a large corporation. George had decided to move to a smaller, virtual company rather than continue down the path of the larger more established companies where he had worked until then. His experiences in dealing with ambiguities would pay dividends during this chapter of his life.

George’s move to a virtual company coincided with a time in his life where he was dealing with greater ambivalence, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (McAdams, 1993). Such a time required George “to look at two contradictory propositions about life and pronounce them both to be true; abstract logic does not allow this” (McAdams, 1993, p. 201). The parallels of lack of clarity in his personal and
professional development required George to use his collective experience to resolve such ambiguities. When decisions needed to be made, George went back to his principles, his search for meaning and for purpose. A clear sense of purpose is what helped George find the right direction in which to proceed (Hackman, 2002). George took a calculated risk in moving to this company, one made by following a combination of critical thinking, and visceral awareness. Intrigued by the opportunity that was in front of him, George felt something he had not felt for some time: energized. This energized state led to passion, and George’s creative side began to flourish as a result (Johansson, 2017). This new venture would be full of opportunities, but also uncertainty. The dynamic tension of the opportunity was not lost on George.

George had learned to embrace the role of ambiguity in his life. Events like September 11th and the cases he encountered while working as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) had taught George that there was little hope in learning every possible outcome and that he was better suited to learning to deal with complexity and ambiguity instead. He had learned that when others “saw a single critical incident, [he] saw a process, a flow of events, and recognized its uncertainty and volatility” (Badaracco, 2002, p. 158). He learned that the world had changed from one that was “data poor but fairly predictable settings to data-rich, uncertain ones” (McChrystal, Silverman, Collins, & Fussell, 2015, p. 73).

George had learned that the challenges in the world were rarely black and white and he used his experiences and creativity to find solutions to such complex challenges (Badaracco, 2002). George worried that as time marched on, humans were creating a world that was ever more complex each year. He had only to look at Frankie’s toys to
know this firsthand. The very thing that helped separate the human race from other animals had also contributed to its near infinite complexity: their cognitive abilities (Cialdini, 2007). Even though more was now known about the world and everything in it, George felt the world was more unpredictable than it had been in the past. He realized with a heavy sigh that “such unpredictability has happened not in spite of technological process but because of it” (McChrystal, Silverman, Collins, & Fussell, 2015, p. 54).

While technology had brought with it significant gains in efficiency, it created a greater need for adaptability to be our core competency as people, as a result (McChrystal, Silverman, Collins, & Fussell, 2015).

George had experienced many of the challenges a transition to the virtual world had brought to him in both his personal and professional lives. Recalling the time he began to work more and more remotely for a company in New England from his home in New Jersey, he thought about the challenges of forming new relationships remotely. For George, the path forward was to spend a significant amount of time traveling to the corporate headquarters to form such relationships. In contrast to that experience, George also fondly remembered how different life at his subsequent employer had begun—offsite on a beach! Recalling these memories brought a smile to his face and made George long for the warmth of the sun's rays once again in the midst of the cold that now filled the outside air. George’s training and experiences in technology often had George think of the circumstances and experiences in his life as if they were all part of a broader, more unifying dynamic system. He knew that in such a dynamic environment, the initial conditions for such a system have a profound impact on those within it (Pink, 2019), and he was thankful for the way in which that time of his life had begun.
George’s role in this new company was one-hundred percent virtual in nature and his time on the beach with his new colleagues was invaluable in setting the right atmosphere and conditions for success. George would learn to work in this remote environment over the coming months, truly realizing for the first time how interconnected his environment would be. Tools like Zoom, Slack and the Google suite of applications meant the teams he was now part of could communicate faster than ever; he experienced how the “ability to transmit information instantly can endow small groups with unprecedented influence” (McChrystal, Silverman, Collins, & Fussell, 2015, p. 27). This also reminded George of the work of Thomas Friedman, who had described globalization as another dynamic system in The Lexus and the Olive Tree. Friedman wrote about how people in pockets of the world could have far reaching impact, sometimes in unforeseen ways.

As George scanned the bookshelf, he located Friedman’s work alongside that of Chaos: The Making of a New Science by James Gleick. Gleick’s work contained similar themes. George enjoyed both works but thought Friedman’s underlying themes of the struggle between global capitalism and the more subtle yet important desire to maintain identity and culture were more impactful than Gleick’s. He remembered the earliest days of his start in this new remote work environment and the words of Jeff Jarvis, who in What Would Google Do?: Reverse engineering the fastest growing company in the history of the world quoted another who wrote in despair about how “our communities are unraveling as we become more disconnected” (Jarvis, 2011, p. 50). George had worried that might happen to him as he started his role in this virtual organization, but after the initial first months, his fears were allayed. George thrived in this new
environment and couldn’t help but think that the combination of his experience and education, both old and the newfound skills he was actively developing at Penn, were the reasons why. George thought about his roots in psychology, and the work of Frederick Winslow Taylor came to mind. The virtual world lacked the physical structures that Taylor-inspired workspaces had been built with — the very structures construed in the name of efficiency which often hindered it (McChrystal, Silverman, Collins, & Fussell, 2015). He knew that this virtual world had a chance to eliminate that problem, and he looked forward to playing an active role in doing just that.

“It’s lunch time, Dear,” called Leigh from the adjacent room.

“OK,” responded George. Lost in thought as he often was, George lost track of time. He had spent the better part of the last hour thinking about the importance of defining a personal mission statement, of the need for principles and how they shaped a leadership style suited for the ambiguous world he now found himself living in. He enjoyed the fond memories of his transition to working in virtual organizations, and how his education helped prepare him for that transition. As he rose from his chair to re-shelve the book he had taken, he began to fold his reading blanket, the one that bore the crest of his alma mater. This is where George had one of his eureka moments. It was his memories of Penn and his studies in the Organizational Dynamics program that made him realize how the vast changes in the world required new mental models to be built, models that would view knowledge, organizations and people as living systems (McChrystal, Silverman, Collins, & Fussell, 2015). It was George’s experience at Penn and the development of new skills such as influence, storytelling, the understanding of politics and integrated thinking that helped him create and refine such models.
The world had become increasingly complex over George’s lifetime and the complexities of work followed closely behind. George had learned to tackle this complexity and ambiguity not with compliance but with creativity, and in the process underwent a transition from one of victim of circumstances to one in greater control of his surroundings (Bridges & Bridges, 2017). Satisfied with this breakthrough, George placed the blanket on the arm of his favorite chair, shelved his book and joined Frankie and Leigh for lunch.
“Thanks, Leigh, that was deelish,” George said as he pushed his chair away from the table. “Shall I help you clean up, Dear?” he asked. Leigh smiled in return, suggesting he and Frankie spend some more time together. “Shall we dive back into our book, Frankie?” George asked. Frankie smiled and nodded in agreement. George grabbed Frankie’s hand and the pair walked backed to the study. Sitting in their normal spot, George opened the book once more and the pair began to read again.

“Awesome story, Billy,” said Carol. “Love that one and I think you’ve set the bar pretty high in terms of best story.”

“I can practically taste the clam chowder now!” Billy said as a smile washed across his face. The band of travelers had begun to show signs of becoming a cohesive group. “Anyone need a stop?” Mike asked from behind the wheel. The murmured returns confirmed that the group felt OK and that they should soldier on towards New England.

“I don’t need a physical stop, but I do need to stop Billy’s ideas of winning by telling my own story!” Carol exclaimed.

“Oh, OK, bring it!” said Billy in response. Carol took a deep breath as she began to weave a tale of her own.

The sand was hot on the beach, and people were running towards the ocean like Carl Lewis at the 1984 Olympic Games. As children frolicked in the sun, and adults tried to take in all of the sun’s rays in an effort to get an all over tan, Charlie was looking for lunch. Darting in and around waves that lapped the shore, Charlie had two little ones and was searching for food. While humans walked the boards in search of pizza, fries, and funnel cake on this sunny Memorial Day, it was just another day of life for Charlie. Unlike most of the others on the beach this crowded Monday, Charlie was a crab.

As crabs went, Charlie was a pretty normal stone crab. A male of average age and size, Charlie went about his day like others of his species. He walked sideways most of the time, largely as a result of the direction his knee was able to bend anatomically, weaving around the natural surf and the unnatural humans who occupied the beach for a quarter of the year. Unable to move as freely as he did the other nine months of the year, Charlie had developed his own unique way of locomotion, one that
enabled him to move in and out of crowds with ease. His ommatidia made vision a complex challenge, and Charlie had difficulties in processing who was a friend and who was a foe. Moving sideways and using the more than 8,000 parts that made up his eyes meant understanding what he experienced was a challenge for Charlie.

Charlie was almost four years old and had two young ones of his own. He had learned the lessons he needed to survive, neatly summarized in four words: seagulls bad, starfish good. To the untrained eye, Charlie was a pretty normal crab. As the average crab lived to at most 7-8 years, Charlie realized that life was short and that he needed to make the most of it, to raise young crabs that could carry on his bloodline. He had developed an ability unique to his species when several months ago, he began to stare into the surf at the water’s edge around sunset. To his amazement, his reflection slowly began to change the older he got. What was once a pure mirror image of himself had slowly begun to transform. Charlie was able to see past events of his life upon reflection. Where he had previously lived through events he didn’t understand, the reflections he experienced now brought meaning to them.

As Charlie stared into this reflection one warm August evening, he became keenly aware that something was lurking behind him. As Charlie turned to face the sunset, he was momentarily blinded. Without warning, Charlie found himself staring down a school of jellyfish. Initially not at all alarmed, he turned again to continue his reflection before hearing a cry for help from his youngest, Cooper. Cooper had wandered into the murky waters just far enough offshore that Charlie could hear him but not see him. It was also unfortunately far enough that the school of jellies nearby had surrounded him. Charlie felt helpless for a moment, choked by the fear of the unknown. In an instant, he snapped out of his reflection and began to construct a plan to rescue his son.

Charlie darted quickly into the intertidal space he called home during the summer months. Far from the larger estuary where he and his family lived, Charlie enjoyed being closer to the waters in the warmer months. This moment would be a kairos moment for him, for the moves he was about to make would certainly make a difference (Duarte, 2010). Without a moment to spare, Charlie darted back out of the sand through a different tunnel, one that carried him closer to Cooper but also to danger.

Moving quickly, Charlie found a way into the inner circle of jellies. Now maneuvering ever so slowly as to avoid detection, Charlie grabbed Cooper by the front claw, flashed a warm smile his way before making a straight line run back to the tunnel that would bring him home. A sense of nostalgia quickly passed in Charlie’s brain, as he recalled the first time he had held Cooper by the claw and showed him the small part of the Pacific they called home. Cooper had barely passed the state of being a zoea, and Charlie remarked about just how quickly he was growing up. Charlie hoped
that a future reflection would allow him to wax nostalgia about this event, but also knew that if he didn’t act fast they had no future. Cooper’s tiny pincer firmly in his claw, Charlie made a quick exit to the safety of home before the jellies even knew he was there.

Back in the comforts of their own habitat, Charlie embraced Cooper and after a long hug and a brief cry, admonished the younger as tenderly as he could. “Cooper — we could have lost you today. I know you’re a curious little fella as I was once your age too — not that long along really,” Charlie began. “While you may see your actions as innocent and playful, one day you will learn to look back on times like this differently, to think about their meaning. Our lives as crabs are short in the grand scheme of things and we need to use the time we have wisely. I’m glad you’re here Cooper — go get some rest.” As Cooper crawled away, Charlie could see signs of his outer shell beginning to crack between the carapace and abdomen. He knew Cooper was growing up quickly and that try as he may Charlie would not be able to slow that maturation process down. Charlie felt a sense of gratitude wash over him alongside the waves that were breaking at the shore. Noticing the familiar shades of pink hue still present on the horizon, Charlie decided to take some reflective time at the shore in the moments that he had left on this Memorial Day. “This year’s holiday was different in so many ways,” Charlie said to himself as he began the long walk to his reflecting spot.

“Wow, Grandpa!” Frankie exclaimed at the conclusion of the story. “These stories just keep getting better and better. They’re all so different- how will the narrator even choose a winner?!” he continued successfully. “Let’s keep going!” Frankie said with excitement. As George began to turn the page, the phone rang. It was Thomas calling to check on Frankie and his parents, to see how they all were doing. After a brief discussion with his son, George handed the phone to Frankie, who began to tell his father about his stay thus far in detail. The stories they were reading, how Leigh had slept on the couch, the food—all the details a child of his age would typically concern himself with were fair game. As Frankie walked into the living room with the phone in hand, George put his arm around Leigh and the two enjoyed some quiet time together. As he did so, George found himself sinking deeper into the couch, still working on his recovery
from his sleep deficit. As if the fireplace was his shoreline, George stared once again as the flames crackled and began to think about the story he just finished in a *Charlie the crab* like fashion.

George was able to relate to Charlie in many ways. George too was often a nostalgic man, viewing nostalgia’s purpose as one that helped create connections to others and discovering a sense of meaning (Pink, 2018). The little crab had orders of magnitude less space in his habitat than George and Leigh did in their home, but they appeared to share at least one thing in common: a longing for nostalgia. George was always fond of picking up a small trinket amongst his travels, trips he often made solo for business purposes or with family for leisure. He also could relate to the very way in which Charlie moved: sideways. George wondered how often he too, “moved like a crab, sideways, too fearful to look head-on at the fact that [he] was taking [himself] from the center to the fringes” of his life (Palmer, 2000, p. 29).

George thought some more about Carol’s story, about how she had used the term *kairos* in describing the moment Charlie the crab had found himself in. This reminded George once more of the high school retreat he attended, the one that had stirred up emotion in George at the time of the event and again during his more recent reflection. George’s retreat, like so many moments in his life, were kairos moments- they were moments that were prime moments for action. George thought again about how kairos moments were what Duarte (2010) referred to as *Moments that Matter* or *STAR-Something to Always Remember*. George viewed such moments as not just negative in nature like 9/11 and Retrouvaille, but also as moments that could be consciously and purposely created for more positive outcomes. Memories of his family vacations on
driving an RV through the Midwest, the road trip to Florida, and his cruise to the Bahamas came rushing back in George’s memory. George smiled a bit before rising from the couch to grab a drink of water from the fridge. George also knew that by re-framing a given experience as something that at first appeared to be only negative in nature, that he could find something positive within it (Palmer, 2010).

With his conversation now complete Frankie had begun to work on a puzzle with Leigh, so George returned to the comfort of his chair, and of his thoughts. He thought some more about how Charlie the crab had discovered his ability to be reflective, and how fortunate the species is that possesses such abilities. Charlie was wise enough to be mindful of the amount of time he spent in thought, being careful not to do so excessively at the risk of not taking action. George knew that a life in which experiences created lessons that were not incorporated into a worldview was not one he wanted to live. Instead, George had come to a conclusion long ago that was similar to that of Faustus in Davalos’ Wittenberg (2010). George had realized that thinking would not ultimately lead him to the truth in the end, but instead would lead him to the truth that there was no end to the thinking. He recalled how Faustus had said to Hamlet that “with every choice you make, strive always for the Truth — on your own terms and yours alone” (Davalos, 2010, p. 61).

George readily identified with the importance of living an authentic life and strove always to do just that. His high school retreat days had taught George about the value in learning to practice reflection as a skill. Like others, he too had learned to develop a tendency to listen for guidance everywhere but from within (Palmer, 2010). George learned to build a network of trusted peers on which he would come to rely
throughout his life to keep him honest, to act as a mirror reflecting his thoughts and values back to him. He knew that amongst his talents, he also had liabilities and what he would come to refer to as “a shadow” (Palmer, 2010). Like the shadows in Plato’s cave, George would learn how to put these shadows in their proper perspective, but only after being made aware of them and working to deepen his understanding of them. Like the sun that had awoken George from his late slumber just hours earlier, George knew that the light of truth, the enlightenment represented in the ideals and principles he had formed over his life, constituted what he was ultimately seeking. As such, George viewed this as the noblest cause of all.

George was fortunate to have met many good people over his life. Always mindful that everyone he met was fighting a battle of their own, George endeavored not to make his problems anyone else's. He recalled once more the weeks following the September 11th attacks where he wandered about his apartment, awake but not present. He remembered the first trip back into NYC less than one month later, and how conflicted he felt about attending a counseling session set up with the best of intentions by his employer. Only later would George come to appreciate what psychologist James Pennebaker would say about the value of reflection. Pennebaker had stated that, “expressing our thoughts and feelings about a stressful or traumatic event is most salutary after we’ve had some time to process the event, when we’re not blinded by anger or consumed by distress” (Grant, 2016, p. 240). The events of September 11th had been transformative to George but not in a way that made any sense to him in 2001, or perhaps even 2003. The true meaning of this event would take longer for George to process. What George did not realize in the short term was that time was precious. Perhaps
awareness of the fragility of time and its potentially scarcity become more apparent to George in that moment (Cialdini, 2007). He had just vividly seen how time was never guaranteed, and it had changed George irrevocably.

George had entered a relatively dark time in his life. Episodic depression and what was likely undiagnosed post traumatic stress began to dominate George’s life for nearly a year following the events of the fateful September day in 2001. While George’s situation had changed and he was no longer in imminent harm, his psychological transition had yet to complete (Bridges, 2017). Through discussions with family and coworkers who experienced the events of that day with George, and with some significant reflection, George was able to identify what he was after sometime in 2003: George found purpose. While he and Leigh had talked about having children in the period leading up to their wedding a few short years prior, they put that decision off for several years in order to see the world and live life the way they wanted. As George reflected on the events that took place on September 11, he focused on how he felt at various times that day: happiness in being alive; sadness in so many lives lost. George was grateful to make it back home but harbored feelings of resentment and bitterness toward those who committed the atrocities of the attacks.

George and Leigh had decided the time for family was now—not later, as there was no guarantee later would ever come. But more than anything else, George found clarity in his purpose. He had come to decide that he wanted to raise children, that somehow through divine intervention he had been saved. He thought about all the other ways the events of that day could have gone.
He could have easily attended the conference on the 110th floor of 1WTC that morning, but wasn’t permitted entrance as he had registered too late.

He could have pressed on in the basement of the WTC complex, going towards the trains that could have taken him home, but he didn’t. If he had, he would have likely been burned as the jet fuel from the airliner ran down the skeleton of the building, setting fire to the concourse.

He could have stayed at the scene of the attacks, trying to help the victims of the tragedy and potentially been significantly or gravely injured by falling debris.

But George did none of those things. He left 2WTC that morning, and as he walked across the street the airliner flew over his head and slammed into the building that just moments ago he had stood in and underneath. George wrestled with the why of these moments for a long time. Then one day, it hit him. George’s search for meaning had led him to further explore his faith, an exploration that yielded something of value. George realized that his time on Earth was not yet up. There were still things he was sent here to accomplish. Although such answers are rarely definitive in nature, George knew this to be true. It was with such purpose that George continued forward. George had learned that times of continuous change “put a premium on knowing clearly what you are trying to accomplish” (Bridges & Bridges, 2017, p. 117).

The years preceding 9/11 were some of the best of George’s life. He had graduated college, gotten married and held a job with a promising future. George would later say the bull run of his life had ended, and the bear market time set in. George had experienced years of stability, and like all systems, life regularly moved between periods of stability and turbulence. 9/11 brought with it the kind of rapid and multidimensional
change that epitomized periods of punctuated equilibrium (Hackman, 2002) and George seized the opportunity to learn something from this experience with vigor.

As Leigh took the phone from Frankie, George could see a smile on her face. Thomas’ work had finished earlier than expected and he was able to change his flight. Thomas would be arriving at the house later that evening, and would spend the night before taking Frankie home the following morning. George looked forward to seeing Thomas again but felt a tinge of sadness that Frankie would be leaving soon. “Come on back, Frankie, we’ve still got more stories to go and your dad will be taking you home tomorrow!” George called. The clock now read 2:30 P.M., as the sun began to fade behind the thick cloud cover. Candy bar in hand, Frankie sat next to George, and breaking a piece of his Three Musketeers bar, handed a piece to George who quickly chomped at it like he was trying to eat Frankie’s hand in the process. Like other times in life, George knew that he had to balance the time spent in reflection with the time spent living in the present. It was never an easy balance for George to maintain, but Frankie’s presence right next to him made it a little easier. George added some fresh logs to the fire and began to read aloud once more.
All this talk about crabs has made me hungry! Can we stop for lunch?” asked Nelly. The group was still discussing Carol’s story, trying to make heads or tails of it, with some wondering what ever happened to little Cooper crab. Thus far, our journey had been fun and uneventful. After a brief discussion on where we might stop for food, the group came to a consensus around Mexican. Some wanted seafood, but others simply couldn’t bring themselves around to do it. Mike found a Mexican place not far off our chosen route and within minutes we were seated at a large, rectangular table.

Tacos and burritos were ordered, and the friendly waitress explained it wouldn’t take long for our food to arrive. Looking as if he had waited for such a time, Brian spoke up. “I can tell the next story,” he said sheepishly. As folks crunched their nachos and sipped their Coronas, Brian began to tell his tale.

Many years ago, I had an uncle, Jessie, who was a health nut. Jessie kept interesting company and always told some of the best stories. One day at Thanksgiving, when I was in my early twenties, Jessie began to tell a story about someone he had met one day at the zoo. As he walked past the birds area and entered that of the primates, he noticed a man of average build about 100 feet in front of him. For some reason Jessie took an interest in what this man was doing. Being about five years his senior, Jessie didn’t mind approaching the man and striking up a discussion with him.

“I’m Jessie,” my uncle said to the man. “Can I ask what you’re up to?” he continued.

“Yes,” came the reply. “My name is Charles. Charles Atlas. I’ve just come from viewing the lions and tigers,” he said. “Something struck me that I’m trying to make sense of. I’ve been exercising for years, constantly throwing more and more weight on the bars and I’m worried about getting hurt. As you head past the tiger cage in the next section, tell me if you see any barbells lying around!” he continued. “Spoiler alert — there aren’t any! How then do you think those lions and tigers keep fit?” Charles asked. Jessie recalled this exchange vividly, and his eyes lit up as told this story on that cold November day (Wallechinsky, 1999).

As we paused for turkey dinner, I found Jessie’s story amazing. I wondered how neat it must have been to meet Charles Atlas, the man who can be considered the inventor of isometric exercise. As the pumpkin pie came out after dinner and folks began to mingle in the dining room, Jessie came up to me once more. He took a small piece of paper out of his pocket, and handed it to me. I opened the small paper and found a poem. It’s odd, I know but you must understand my uncle was an oddball of sorts. He hadn’t always been the best student and he learned to use the sing-
song like rhyming of poetry to help him remember things. On this date however, he completely blew me away with what he had written.

“I want you to have this”, he said. “I want you to remember this dinner and our conversation and I want you to remember what Mr. Atlas had taught me that day at the zoo,” Jessie continued. Jessie paused and gave me the chance to read the words on that slip of paper. I remember them clear as day; they went like this:

Powerlifting; so far misunderstood.
Biceps and abs simply not just our goals.
Pushing yourself to injury, not good.
The desire to train is in our souls.

Squat, bench and arm curls three primary lifts.
Push-ing and pull-ing, sequenced tension.
Most do not want pain, we see it as gifts.
Movements must be done in pairs, no question.

Charles Atlas — a pioneer, big not small.
Strength is the main reason for which we train.
Dynamic tension, rationale for all.
Technique is the reason for which we gain.

We’re measuring progress in thoughts, not tons
Goal: solve the growth paradox, never done.

(My Uncle Jessie had captured the essence of his run-in with Charles Atlas in none other than a sonnet! I recall that event like it was yesterday. I was infatuated with the dinner, with the conversation, with the fact that my Uncle Jessie knew how to write a sonnet!

“That’s what I got! Told you it was different,” Brian said excitedly. His timing was good and as he was wrapping up lunch hit the table. The group enjoyed a good meal and conversation. Before long, they were back in the van as they continued on their way. With a little more than 125 miles left to go, and with only two stories left to tell, the group had started to gel. As differences amongst the three small groups began to fade, the passengers seemed to really enjoy one another’s company. The series of chance encounters back in the airport had thus far been pleasurable.)
No sooner did George finish this story than he realized that Frankie was gone. He had made a beeline for the bathroom without a word and was now out of sight. “I’ll get him started on something dear,” said Leigh. George thanked Leigh and walked to the kitchen to get a fresh cup of coffee. The sun had started to set by this time, and the snow outside had shown its first signs of freezing. George hoped that Thomas’ flight would arrive as scheduled and believed the short fifteen minute ride from the airport would be well plowed by this time of day.

As George thought about the story he had just finished reading, his mind wandered to what he would say to Thomas when he saw him again. George recalled how just a few days prior, he and Thomas hadn’t left on the best of terms. When preparing for difficult discussions, as he had all of his professional life, George often got stuck in his own thought process. He knew he had to communicate his message clearly and concisely to be effective but simultaneously feared that any communication he made would further introduce the possibility of his being misunderstood. This paradox often left George in a state of panic, and it was this state he now found himself in.

George had wrestled with paradox for most of his life. Perhaps none other than a statement he read in the work of Rabbi Johnathan Sacks (2015) epitomized this. While setting up his work early in his book Sacks remarked about how people were social animals, stating, “we hand on our genes as individuals, but we survive only in groups” (Sacks, 2015, p. 29). George was perplexed by this notion and had spent time thinking about just how much of a paradox this was. He had further explored paradox in the work of Smith and Berg (1997) who wrote extensively on the topic of paradoxes as they applied to groups. He thought about his relationship with Thomas, about how from the
beginning, George’s role as father in their relationship meant establishing boundaries of behavior that would be expected and those that would not be tolerated.

Like any other child, Thomas often pushed the boundaries where and when he could. George, like any other father, had struggled at times as to where the boundaries ought to exist, from the mundane (bed times, screen time) to the more important (proper role of work and relationships in Thomas’ high school and college years). Most of the arguments Thomas had with George in the first twenty years of his life concerned boundaries George and Leigh had set to help govern Thomas’ behavior, to raise him in a way consistent with the principles his family upheld. George knew that even boundaries that appeared to be unjust had more utility for Thomas’ development than no boundaries at all would have had (Smith & Berg, 1997). By the time Thomas had graduated from college, George knew that boundaries were an important part of the social construct between him and Thomas, so much so that without such boundaries no relationship could exist (Smith & Berg, 1997). George realized it was the presence of boundaries that established his relationship with his son; as much as he may have wanted to remove the very thing that created so much strife, he could not. George realized in the end that living with paradox was difficult, and it demanded courage (Smith & Berg, 1997).

Before getting lost once more in his own head, George decided it would be best to park his current train of thought. Decades of trying to decipher paradoxes only left George frustrated and tired. Turning his attention back to the story of Charles Atlas, George thought about the words of the sonnet. The quatrains of the Shakespearian sonnet were perfect and the final couplet echoed his sentiment about paradox. George didn’t like to see the world in black or white, a world where pursuing idea A meant
acknowledging but abandoning idea B. George despised the notion of having to choose between two perfectly good options, knowing full well that in a paradox both choices cannot be chosen in unison. George’s view of the world was more integrated, seeing room for both ideas A and B to exist simultaneously. Rather than adopting a paradoxical view of the world, George preferred to think of the relationships amongst objects, events and people as those held in dynamic tension instead.

“Dynamic tension! Yes, that’s it,” George said out loud. He had re-read the sonnet once more, focusing on the line *dynamic tension - rationale for all*. George began to think about this some more, wondering what the world might be like if paradoxes were replaced with ideas held in tension instead. He thought about his relationship with Leigh, how both worked to understand and appreciate the other, moving in a “push-pull” fashion throughout their relationship. George was always the more adventurous of the two, and Leigh more reserved. He recalled a discussion that took place one evening where he and Leigh were preparing for bed. Discussing their differences and how they complimented one another, Leigh remarked to George about how sometimes he gave her a push when she needed one, while she was there to reign him back in when he went just a little too far. Like a vehicle that needed both an accelerator in order to move and brakes to slow it down (Badaracco, 2002), the dynamic tension in George and Leigh’s relationship had found a harmonious equilibrium.

The sound of the doorbell ringing brought George’s musing to an end. Thomas had arrived, just in time for supper. He and Leigh were very much looking forward to spending some time with Thomas before he left in the morning to take Frankie home. George greeted Thomas at the door, embracing him close enough to feel the cold of
Thomas’ cheeks on his own. “Come on in, son—great to see you!” George said. Thomas stepped inside, laid his overnight bag on the tile floor and began to remove his shoes. Frankie had also heard the bell ringing, and came running to the door to greet his father. Thomas and Frankie embraced, and when they were finished all four moved to the living room to sit adjacent to the fireplace.

Conversation at dinner was cordial and largely consisted of George and Leigh telling Thomas about how they spent their time with Frankie. Thomas in return talked about his trip, the personalities he met and where he had taken his clients to eat. When dinner wrapped up, Frankie went upstairs for his evening bath and the three adults began to clear the table. “Go sit inside you two, and catch up,” Leigh said to George. Leigh knew that George and Thomas needed some time to reconnect with one another. Leigh was excellent at knowing when something was on George’s mind and she had identified this time correctly. Retreating back into George’s library, the two men sat down across from one another.

“What’s up, Pop?” Thomas asked as he raised an eyebrow. He had inherited his mom’s ability to determine when something was unresolved, and he sat down knowing full well a discussion was about to begin.

In a moment, George had put aside all of his concerns about the paradox of saying something to Thomas, instead blurting out, “Tommy — I’m sorry about the way things ended two days ago between us. It’s been weighing on my mind since you left, and I’m sorry,” George said as a tear began to form in his eye.

“Pop — it’s no big deal!” Thomas said. “Please — don’t worry about it, it’s nothing,” he continued. “I’m sorry too, Pop, for the way I stormed out. I’ve been
stressed at work lately and didn’t really want to make the trip down to NYC this week,”
Thomas continued. George was relieved at this comment, and excused himself to go
retrieve two cups of coffee for them.

As Thomas sat waiting for his dad to return, he glanced into the distance at a
bookcase with a family photo. Along with his two brothers and sister was his mom and
dad. The photo had been taken many years ago and Thomas looked to be about the same
age then as Frankie was now. Thomas closed his eyes in search of a brief respite, weary
from the travel home that evening. Thomas had been weighing a recent offer he received
from an architectural firm. The firm offered to make Thomas a managing partner and the
compensation was significantly higher. Thomas had been thinking about it for the past
week and knew he had to make a decision by early next week. In his mid forties, Thomas
was wrestling with what seemed to be two different story arcs forming at this point in his
life. On the one hand, he had built a successful individual practice for himself. He had
the freedom to work when he wanted and to take off time to be with Frankie whenever he
felt like it. Travel was intermittent and largely at Thomas’ discretion. Taking the role
with the larger firm as a managing partner would mean better benefits for his family, a
substantial raise in pay and paid vacations. It would also mean longer hours and
significant travel.

Thomas had initially wanted to be a partner in a firm one day but that was before
Frankie was born. Thomas knew that his time with Frankie would change significantly
before the next decade as Frankie entered high school and then college. Until now,
Thomas had somehow found a way to have everything he wanted in life. As he entered
his mid-forties however, he noticed tension building between two opposing forces within
him. He had tried to talk himself out of the opportunity he had, but had trouble letting go of the prestige and compensation that came with it. It would be life-changing for his family, not only in terms of dollars and cents but also in terms of quality time they would no longer spend together. The more he thought about the pros and cons of each, the more distraught he found himself. On the flight back from NYC, he realized he had created the very tension he now wrestled with into two identities that made up his own life (McAdams, 1993): the need to achieve and the need to be a doting father to Frankie.

“Here you go, son,” George said as he handed a cup of coffee to Thomas. As he grabbed the handle of the mug, Thomas noticed it was decorated with images of San Diego. Thomas winced as he took a sip from the mug, mostly because the coffee was hot but also because San Diego is where the corporate firm who made him an offer was based. He knew he needed to make a decision soon, and George could see the anguish in his face. “Tommy- I imagine your offer is weighing on your mind. What does your gut tell you? What does your heart tell you? What does your brain tell you?” George asked softly. Thomas pondered the words of his father, sitting in silence as he rocked back and forth gently. George got up, walked to the bookcase and grabbed a small photo frame from the top shelf. Returning to his chair once more and facing Thomas, he handed Thomas the frame. Thomas looked at the frame and read it aloud.

There is something in every one of you that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself. It is the only true guide you will ever have. And if you cannot hear it, you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls.

(Goodreads- Howard, n.d.)
“Tommy - this quote was given to me years ago, on a tiny slip of paper. I read it then, as I do today and as I suspect you just did: with amazement,” George said. “I can’t tell you what to do in this case Tommy - only you know. But you need to spend time really thinking about what’s important to you,” George continued. “Think about the principles you hold true, what you want Frankie to value in life. Decisions like this will take courage, regardless of how you decide, and you will spend weeks, maybe months, and if you're lucky not years thinking about what if,” George continued. George got up and grabbed a book from the library, thumbed through the pages and placed the book face down to an open page on Thomas’ lap before putting his hands on Thomas’s shoulders. “Read this section before you call it a night, Tommy,” George said. “Think about the words Jesus uses to describe the aspirational faith we all seek, that of children,” he continued. “Jesus doesn’t tell us to remain children- time won’t allow that. He does however ask us to become one as this propels us towards a state of innocence. It is this innocence, not that of the newborn child but that reached through conscious choice, like the one you now face, Tommy, that makes us all, you and I included, true children of God (Nouwen, 1994). I love you, Tommy, — sleep on it and let’s chat some more tomorrow before you head out,” George said.

“Thanks, Pop — love you too and love talking to you about this stuff,” Thomas replied. Thomas stared into the fireplace, as the once mighty flames had dwindled into the glowing ashes that now transfixed his gaze. Thomas couldn’t help but think about the contrast between this physical fire, and the fire deep inside of him fueled by the love of
his parents (Nouwen, 1994). Recognizing his son may have needed that moment, George smiled and began to rise from his chair.

“Oh, by the way what time are you leaving?” George asked. “I’ve been reading a book to Frankie but we’re not done yet. I’m curious to know how much time I’ll have to finish it up,” he continued.

Thomas thought for a minute before saying, “Probably after lunch — is that enough time?” George shrugged his shoulders hoping they could finish the last two tales the following day. If he couldn’t, he was already thinking about which one he would cut out if need be.
THE CASTLEBURY TALES: CHAPTER NINE

Frankie had awoken early the following morning and was already downstairs as George walked into the kitchen. “Morning, Pal,” George said playfully as he planted a kiss on Frankie’s forehead.

“Hey, Pop,” came the response. “Dad says we’re leaving today—any chance we can finish the last two stories in that book? I want to see who gets the chowder!” Frankie said excitedly.

Taking a bite from his muffin, George responded, “Sure thing Frankie. Let me get a cup of joe and we’ll continue. Sound good?”

Before he had finished speaking, Frankie took a final bite of the waffle Leigh had made him earlier that morning. Grabbing the red and blue blanket, Frankie hopped on the couch, smiled at George and said, “Ready when you are Pop!” George smiled back, gave Leigh a good morning hug and walked into the room where Frankie sat waiting. Stoking the fire again, George sat down. As he lifted the book on to his lap, he could feel Frankie’s head lean into his shoulder.

The heavity of the taco and burrito lunch had set in and for a period of time, a silence had fallen over the van. As we hit a pothole on the road, some of the folks were jolted awake. Collecting herself, Nelly was the first to break the silence. “My my Brian — weightlifting poetry?” she said somewhat sarcastically. “Did your uncle really know Charles Atlas?” she continued.

“I guess you’ll never know Nel…” Brian said as he smiled at Nelly.

Mike added, “Yea — that was...different. You must really want that chowder!” I had given Mike a break from driving, as he had sat behind the wheel since we left the airport and the Mexican lunch laid heavy in his gut. Seizing his opportunity as we passed a road sign that said Boston, 75 miles, Mike did the chivalrous thing and asked Nelly if she’d like to go next. We had a little more than an hour to go.
Go ahead sport,” Nelly responded. At that, Mike adjusted his seat and cleared his throat. He had been waiting for this time since shortly after we left Philly.

*Elauwit 37* was the call sign of a small passenger plane that had left Newark Liberty Airport less than an hour prior enroute to Washington, DC. “Elauwit 37, you are clear for landing on runway 14 Right,” came the call over the radio. Acknowledging the tower, the pilot turned the plane in the necessary direction and began planning his approach. James was an experienced military pilot who had made the transition to civilian life a few months back after six years of serving his country. Used to faster, more agile planes than the small Cessna he was now flying, James had strong knowledge and experience of how to operate an aircraft. Despite the fewer than 200 hours of experience in the craft he currently controlled, James felt confident in executing his maneuvers as instructed. As he entered the coordinates required to make his approach, James felt like he was in control of the plane.

James’ transition had been difficult at times, and the transition from soldier to civilian was far more difficult than that of the differences in instrumentation of aircraft. James had formed some strong relationships in the military with both men and women who could readily identify with the challenges and stressors he faced. Now in the civilian world, James was looking for comparable relationships to strike up. James had learned to idolize pilots of incredible skill, from Daniel “Chappie” James Jr. in the Korean War to Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger, admiring them for what they did both in and outside the cockpit. His time in the military had taught him that “learning to fly” was a misrepresentation of the real process. Rather, becoming a pilot meant making a commitment to a lifetime of learning, each experience making him better in the role. It also meant that James learned how to use both his formal training and his abilities and intuition in order to improve his chances of success both in the air and on the ground.

As James approached Dulles Airport, he radioed his position to air traffic control. James was methodical as he ran through the checklist to prepare for landing. He was keenly aware that such checklists existed to ensure steps were followed in critical or stressful moments but also understood their limitations. Although he had many successful landings on an aircraft carrier, in storms or in total darkness, he would never forget the lessons he learned as a young Lieutenant early in his career. One evening during a training run, James had made his final approach to the carrier U.S.S. Nimitz and all signs indicated a clear path to the carrier’s deck from the cockpit of James’ F-16 fighter. Flying at close to 1200 miles per hour meant every move James made was a significant one. As he focused
on the complex, technical cockpit of the multi-million-dollar machine he was flying, James did not notice that his altimeter had begun to fail him. James’ altimeter displayed that he was 6000 feet from the flight deck, when in reality he was closer to 2000 feet. James’ training kicked in at that point and he made the necessary maneuvers to recover and attempt a second landing, but the lesson he learned that day was now etched in his mind. Pilots were highly trained professionals and needed to rely on their training but never neglect to observe their surroundings. James had learned that both education and practical measures both played a role in helping avoid catastrophe. Education alone was insufficient and James vowed to never repeat such a mistake again.

James’ adjusted the yaw of his plane as he readied for his final approach, checking to ensure his dials and gauges matched the reality of what he was seeing out the window. As he continued to make minor adjustments to yaw and pitch, James began to think about something he hadn’t previously given much thought to. The compass on his plane changed ever so slightly with every adjustment he made, but the indicators for true North remained the same. He thought about the parallels in his own life as of late, as he made adjustments big and small to help him manage the transition from military to civilian life, and how his end goal, like true North on his compass, never wavered. He knew that making this transition a success was important for him and his future plans. He had spent so much of his energy trying to keep the details in order, rather than remaining committed to the overall direction he was heading in and allowing for minor variation throughout. In the end, he knew that landing the plane safely is what mattered most and that changes en route to that destination were inevitable and constant.

James made a safe landing that day, touching down just a few minutes behind schedule. As he taxied to his assigned gate, he continued to work through his checklist ensuring all steps required were completed. He looked forward to exiting the plane and seeing his family, as that was the purpose of his flight this afternoon. Shutting down the engine, James realized that this experience, like many others, increased his confidence in his ability to be successful. He was simultaneously struck by the idea that the more he learned about flying, the less he really knew.

“Cool story, Pop!” Frankie exclaimed as George turned the final page of Mike’s tale. “Did you ever fly a plane, Grandpa?” the boy asked his grandfather.

George chuckled, responding, “No I haven’t, Frankie — I’ve done a lot in life but
flying a plane isn’t on that list. It’s been great spending time with you these past few days — glad we could do it! Your dad is still sleeping, Frankie — why don’t you pack up your things so you’re ready to head out when your dad is. I’m sure Grandma would love to finish that puzzle with you also before you leave,” George said. Frankie nodded and, in a flash, had hopped up off George’s lap and darted upstairs. George refreshed his coffee and together, he and Leigh cleaned up from breakfast. As Frankie returned with his suitcase in hand, Leigh took Frankie by the hand and walked towards a table in the living room where they had been working on their puzzle together. Raising the shade, Leigh squinted as the sun came streaming through — a welcome sight after the days of cold and darkness that had accompanied the snow these past few days.

George grabbed the dishes and began to wash them. As he did so, he began to think about the story he and Frankie had just read. He thought about the challenges the pilot in Mike’s tale was facing, and images of the plane and its construction and instrumentation were front and center in George’s mind. James, the pilot in the tale, was in an interesting time of his life, in the middle of a transition between military and civilian life. From the little that he read, George hoped that James had a solid foundation of principles in his life that would give him the strength he would need to finish his journey, not in the plane but in his life. George thought about how education and experience in his own life acted like the stabilization systems of a plane. From what little he knew about airplanes, he knew that without lift, stabilization and the ability to steer a plane in the direction you wanted to take it, a plane could lead you to a place you didn’t want to be or worse — to disaster.

George believed that the plane and pilot acted as one unit, moving in unison —
one relying on the other. While the pilot took actions based on his/her training and experience, relying on what had worked in the past and avoiding prior mistakes, he/she also needed to possess the ability to read the terrain, to physically see the world through the window as it was and not necessarily as he wished it to be. To do one and not the other would likely lead to disaster. Training builds confidence while observations paint reality. Putting them together enabled the pilot to interpret what he saw and act accordingly. In turn, each action taken furthers experience (good or bad) and that makes the pilot better able to respond in the future to both known and unknown issues. Once again George was struck by paradox and how life, like flying, seemed to wrestle with the same challenge. Each experience George had inspired more questions in his life in his search for meaning but also increased his confidence. George wrestled with the paradoxical nature of the fact that the more you know, the more you realize you have so much more to learn.

George knew that if James’ principles were strong, his direction in life would remain the same. Like a compass, one’s principles in life lead one always to a true North that never deviates despite the squiggly line of the path one might ultimately take. George thought of parallels in his own life and realized his graduate education served as the stabilizer in his life, providing him with the ability to navigate and steer through many of life’s challenges and transitions. His family had generated the lift he often needed when times got tough. His compass was none other than the principles he maintained; George’s faith was his true North. As he continued to wash dishes one by one, George’s mind continued to wander.

As George continued to think about transitions in his own life, he thought about
something he had read years prior. In their work *Managing Transitions*, authors William and Susan Bridges (2017) define discrete phases for dealing with the human side of organizational change. The authors used the term “neutral zone” to define the period of time between the end of event A and the start of event B, defining the neutral zone as “a nowhere between two somewheres, and because while you are in it, forward motion seems to stop while you hang suspended between what was and will be” (Bridges & Bridges, 2017, p. 46). The authors continue to describe the various challenges neutral zones present including rising levels of anxiety, increased absence rates at work, and the re-emergence of old weaknesses that had previously been compensated for (Bridges & Bridges, 2017). George had felt many of those same things over his life while in his own neutral zone between events like 9/11, Retrouvaille and when he had been let go from a firm following a merger. It was the last memory that was perhaps most painful as it felt the least just to him in the end.

George had spent three years of his career working for a firm through volatile times of both a planned acquisition of his company that failed and a merger that succeeded. He had spent his time as a global leader in that organization, crafting the future state vision of the combined organization. Within months of the organization’s merger completing, George found himself on the outside — let go and replaced. George felt a myriad of emotions during that time ranging from anger and bitterness to nervousness about his future. George had weathered a number of challenges in the past but this one felt different. He had helped create a future that he was not part of. Although George knew that his employment was always at will, this still came as a surprise to him. What shouldn’t have surprised him was that in a period of organizational
change transition would always play a role. Regardless, he found himself on the outside for reasons not of his choosing for the first time in his career.

George also realized upon reflection that this period of his own life was undergoing its own transition. Now in his mid forties, George had realized that perhaps some version of his own mid-life crisis was unfolding. Although George’s crisis did not involve lavish spending on cars or the like, it did include some of the more stereotypical aspects of the crisis. McAdams (2006) had best described George’s view on this period of life when quoting Daniel Levinson; McAdams said, “Every genuine reappraisal must be agonizing, because it challenges the illusions and vested interests on which the existing life structure is based.” George realized this was a transition for him not just in life but in the imagoes he had thus far created in his life. George saw such parallels in his life then as he did in Thomas’ life now.

George knew that Thomas would be downstairs soon, and thoughts of finishing the final story with Frankie became front and center. He also knew that he should chat with Thomas about strategies he had developed in times of transition of his own that could help Thomas with the choice he now faced. George had learned much in his life and knew that Thomas could directly benefit from his experiences; he also knew that he needed to be crisp in what he spoke to Thomas about. At that point George decided he was going to talk to Thomas about CUSP, or how Thomas was likely searching for control, understanding, support and priorities in his life (Bridges & Bridges, 2017). Gaining control of life while developing an understanding of what was happening to him would be important to Thomas. George knew he needed to help Thomas weigh each of his options and the respective impact of each. He needed to show Thomas his support in
the simplest of ways: through listening to him and through being present for him.

Finally, he needed to help Thomas discover his own priority. As George was now thinking more about legacy at his point in his life, Thomas was in a different phase with different priorities. Despite such differences between father and son, each could learn from the other.

As the rays of sunlight filtered through the window where Leigh and Frankie continued to work on their puzzle, George finished the last of his dishes. The forecast for the day called for warmer temperatures as George flashed back to his view of the garden yesterday while Frankie played. He thought about how seasons were fundamentally periods of transition. Recalling warm days at the beach and cold days on the mountain, George thought most about his favorite season of all: spring. George loved the period between winter and summer, how the earth gradually transformed from cold and barren to hot and full of life. Springtime was what Parker Palmer called “a world so wet and woeful it makes you yearn for the return of ice” (Palmer, 2000, p. 103). It was the time when George began thinking about what he would plant for the coming year, about how he would need to till his soil with compost or humus. George chuckled as he realized that humus was in many ways the last contribution plants and other living matter made as living organisms, giving of themselves in their dying so that others might live. Recalling Palmer (2000) once more, George realized that the words humus and humility shared the same root word. This realization made George appreciate that events like the unjust departure that left George confused and humiliated, that had left “mud on his face,” could also be viewed as events that helped prepare the way for something new. It was in this period precisely where George felt a surge of creativity in his life and in his
work. He realized now more than ever that transition wasn’t something he should shy away from but that he should embrace and manage. He would find a new role rather quickly and bring to it a rejuvenated sense of creativity, a character in George’s life story that had been slowly developing below the surface for so long a time.

By now Thomas had begun to stir upstairs, taking a leisurely morning to catch up on his sleep. George freshened his coffee, walked past Leigh and Frankie before taking a seat in the living room. George knew that if Thomas accepted the role he had been offered that he would be eager to get started, to get out of his own neutral zone. George thought about his own experiences and knew the importance of ensuring a proper ending was brought to the old before beginning the new (Bridges & Bridges, 2017). George had learned from his time in between the position from which he was downsized and his new one that endings played a role in four key areas: they help one re-energize and look for significance in what just transpired, encode the experience just had for future retrieval, edit out the details one may not want to remember and finally elevate oneself in preparation for what’s next (Pink, 2019). George knew then that the message he wanted to leave with Thomas was that the mixture of happiness and sadness, two emotions held in dynamic tension with one another, was what ultimately delivered what George craved in his life: significance (Pink, 2019).

As George took the final sip from his coffee mug, Thomas arrived downstairs. “Morning, Pop,” he said and George smiled in response. “I was thinking about our discussion last night and thought if you had some time we could continue it a bit before I head out a little later,” Thomas said as he poured himself a cup of coffee.

“Sure thing, Tommy - have a seat. Frankie is busy with mom so now is as good a
time as we’re going to get,” George said in response. As he sat down, George began to explain to Thomas all that he had planned out. He spoke about the importance of weighing his options, thinking about the decision he was going to make and weighing the various factors that a decision like this required. He shared with Thomas his own experiences of transitions and finally the concepts of the *neutral zone* and *the ending* that Thomas might find himself in based on how he decided.

Thomas listened attentively to his dad, and when George had finished Thomas said in response, “All sounds reasonable, Pop, but I’m fearful of the move.”

George nodded warmly, leaned in a bit closer to his son and putting his arm on his shoulder said, “Son — there is no certainty in life. Amongst all the ambiguities and uncertainty you need to move in a direction that makes sense for you and your son. And when you do decide, do so with conviction.” Thomas nodded and appeared to stare blankly into the distance. George stood up, walked over to his bookcase and selected a book by Parker Palmer (2000) off the shelf titled *Let your life speak: Listening for the voice of vocation*. As he turned to find the page he was looking for, George spoke tenderly to Thomas once more saying, “Tommy — this book has been a treasure to me and I’d like for you to take it home and read it before you make a decision. This passage had significance for me when I was let go from a role I had when you were a younger man. Listen to what I’m about to say.” Having found the page he was looking for, George began to read aloud:

As often happens on the spiritual journey, we have arrived at the heart of the paradox: each time a door closes, the rest of the world opens up. All we need to do is stop pounding on the door that just closed, turn around — which puts the
door behind us — and welcome the largeness of life that now lies open to our souls. The door that closed kept us from entering a room, but what now lies before us is the rest of reality. (Palmer, 2000, p. 54)

As he finished reading, George looked up to see a tear begin to form in Thomas’ eyes. The significance of this decision had clearly been weighing on him and the words of his father seemed to soothe his pain, if only momentarily, and this brought joy to George. As the son rose to embrace his father, the two shared a moment of silence but one far from emptiness. Thomas was the first to speak, saying, “I think I’m going to go for it, Dad.”

George kept his arms around his son’s shoulders, and in true George fashion said, “Great, Tommy, I’m happy for you and your mom and I are here to support you. Let’s grab some more coffee and we can discuss how to ensure you get started on the right foot.” George knew how important his family, friends and teachers were to him during a career transition he underwent and wanted to be supportive to his son. The two men walked back into the kitchen, refilled their cups, and returned to the couch once again.

George began to help Thomas understand the importance of beginning on the right foot. Relying on his experiences once more, George spoke of the importance of ensuring Thomas had purpose in taking his new role and that he could clearly articulate a picture of what success looked like. Furthermore, George spoke of the need for creating a proper plan, and finally to assign “parts” to people in his life as a Director would in a stage play (Bridges & Bridges, 2017). In doing so, Thomas would help ensure the best possible outcome for himself as he began to walk along his newly chosen path. In doing so, Thomas would in turn create a “new mental account” for the experience he was about to embark on, a personal landmark of sorts that would serve to mark this new start in
Thomas’ life (Pink, 2019). George spoke of how he himself had done just that following the events of 9/11 and how he had used calendar cues to create motivation for change during events like New Years each year.

George continued to talk to Thomas, explaining that he thought of change and its inevitable transitions as a force throughout life. George encouraged Thomas that spending ample time in the neutral zone before beginning anew was important to help Thomas develop a new identity, experience the energy that comes with a fresh start, and ultimately to find purpose (Bridges & Bridges, 2017).

As celebratory noises marked the completion of Frankie and Leigh’s puzzle in the room next door, George knew that he needed to wrap his discussion with Thomas up. Thomas would be leaving soon, and the ending of The Castlebury Tales was in sight for Frankie. “Listen, Tommy — there a few more things I want you to understand about change before you head out,” George said. He began to explain how he himself had felt guilt and resentment, along with anxiety, self-absorption, and stress in the days following his notice from the firm from which he was downsized and how each of these feelings were perfectly normal and healthy (Bridges & Bridges, 2017). He knew that the circumstances of his own transition were different from Thomas’, but George wondered if that mattered. He wondered if skipping any of the phases would cause more harm than good in the end. As Frankie ran past the two men and headed back upstairs, George knew he had to finish up. Like James, the pilot in the last tale he had read to Frankie, George needed to land this plane. Looking at Thomas he said softly, “Tommy — think of our faith and how you were raised. To me, you are like Moses in the Old Testament.” As he said this, Thomas’ attention grew stronger. George continued, “The outlook,
attitudes, values, self-images, and ways of thinking that were functional in the past have to ‘die’ before [you] can be ready for life in the present” (Bridges & Bridges, 2017).

Thomas smiled once more and closed his eyes in contemplative thought. Both he and George were thankful for the time together; both men walked away thinking they had benefitted more than the other in the process.
“All right, Frankie, let’s go! Let’s finish this thing!” George said excitedly.

Frankie had helped his dad out to the car and was coming back inside the door as George spoke.

OK, Grandpa — I’m ready!” Frankie said in response. The two men, young and old, would cuddle up one final time with anticipation and appreciation.

“Here we go, buddy” George said as he opened the book.

As Mike neared the end of his story, the travelers entered Massachusetts. A short distance later they found themselves arriving at the valet station of the Omni Hotel in Boston. It was here that Parkers Pub was located, where the prize of clam chowder and cold beer was to be awarded. “Let’s go — I’m starving,” said Billy, and all were in agreement. We had made good time but it was near dinner at this point. With only a few short hours to go before first pitch, we all went inside. As we sat for dinner, I began to feel a mix of emotions. I had grown to like each of my newfound travelers. Like characters in a book whom one learns to root for or against, each of my new companions was unique and joyful in their own way. My moment of zen wouldn’t last long however. As Nelly took her seat, she spoke up.

“Once we get our drinks ordered, I’m gonna start my tale. All of you have told some good stories and I hope you’re ready for mine. My story is good, and I’m hungry and thirsty!” she said with zeal. The group laughed collectively and nodded in agreement. As the server took our drink orders, Nelly took a big swig of water and began the last of the tales in our journey.

Once upon a time, there was a symphony I used to frequent back in Cuba, where I grew up. The symphony played in the most beautiful of concert halls, lush red velvet curtains graced the building from floor to ceiling. Ornamental chandeliers hung from the soaring vault, casting a perfect light on the performers. The acoustics were top notch and enabled the audience to bathe in the orchestra’s music. While many other symphonies and their music halls might share similar descriptions, this one was unique: all four of the orchestra section leads were women.

This arrangement, all puns intended, was unique in that it was unusual for its time. I considered myself a patron of the arts in Havana and held subscriptions to Auditorio Amadeo Roldán for many years, starting in the mid 1940s and ending in 1955 with a change in leadership in my
country. In the mid 40s, the first female lead for the strings section, Ms. Alandra Hernández, assumed a leadership role. A few years later, first chair for woodwinds was held by Ms. Miquela Peña. Later that same year, Ms. Dorbeta Herrera led the brass section. It would take another three years, 1949 to be exact, for the orchestra to name the final female lead, in the percussion section: Mrs. Gotzone Díaz. As a supporter of Auditorio Amadeo Roldán, I was ecstatic and my career as an optometrist enabled me to increase my support for the arts.

The musical arrangements during the next several years seemed to take on a different tone than in all years before. I attended each show with my husband, and we found the music to be enriching in our lives. When I thought things couldn’t get any better, the orchestra appointed its first female conductor in 1951. Ms. Damita Rodríguez was a force to be reckoned with. She was barely five feet tall, but what she lacked in physical stature she made up for in intelligence, passion and charisma. She led the orchestra to new highs, attendance surging for each of her first seven years at the podium. Sadly, there would be no eighth. By the end of the decade, Fidel Castro would be sworn in as Prime Minister and creativity within the arts world would slowly fade in the years that followed.

I had started a relationship with all of these women at cocktail parties and receptions and each was a shining star in her own way. I recall vividly stories each of the women would tell, one better than the next. Perhaps the most striking came from Ms. Peña, who played first chair clarinet in Brahms and Berio’s Op. 120, No. 1. This sonata was lovely, full of emotion and played flawlessly. What struck me, however, was how Ms. Peña spoke of a sonata not in terms of notes and rests but as a way in which to understand life itself. She would speak of how sonatas mirror life with a beginning, middle and end. How, like life, they make use of contrast to keep things interesting, focusing on each rise and fall and the transitions that hold them together. Ms. Hernández would speak about the difficulties she had faced in breaking the orchestral glass ceiling, and how she often felt afraid and wanted to give up. She spent time, often alone, thinking about whether this fight was worth it and searching for the courage to continue. Ms. Herrera would speak of how often she practiced at home, hours on end, until she could depress the keys of her trumpet no more. She too echoed the others, sharing a feeling of hopelessness at times that she would succeed in her goals of leadership. Mrs. Diaz was surprisingly the most docile of the four, almost a direct opposite of the persona she displayed on stage while striking the marimba and xylophone. All of these women were wonderful people, but none were quite like Ms. Rodríguez.

Damita Rodríguez had risen to fame as the first female conductor in Havana. Her life had been a series of trials since early childhood and Damita had persevered and made the most of all she had been through,
attending Amadeo Roldan Conservatory. She learned to combine her experiences in life with her education in ways that others were not capable of. She had spent time discovering what was important to her and used that to unify others in support of a common goal. Damita actively sought out people who held different views than her own, inviting them out for a cafe-con-leche or passion fruit mojitos, her personal favorite. She would open up a dialogue with them, speaking of the need to focus on what we had in common, not what made us different. She would speak of how she preferred to lead polyphonic pieces of music, where one instrument played the melody while the others complimented it (Duarte, 2010). It was this textual contrast that she created on stage, and in her life.

Damita was a master on stage, and it was a position where her leadership qualities really stood out. We would spend more and more time together as her formal role came to an end and she became one of my closest friends in the early sixties. She would talk of the challenges of leading an orchestra, of trying to keep the entire piece together as one while simultaneously shifting attention from one section to the other. This was important, she would say, for if you could not hear both individual sections while holding the melody and harmony together then each change would sound new and unrelated to the greater whole (Bridges & Bridges, 2017). Given her role, she learned to lead and to take responsibility for failure while distributing credit when the orchestra performed well.

Our friendship would last just a few more years. At the height of the revolution, Damita went to fight for her country’s survival and sadly perished. I attended her funeral in our hometown of Havana. Ms. Hernández and Ms. Diaz also attended, and we shared both stories and tears together one final time. Miquela Peña had emigrated to Columbia by then. None of us had seen or heard from Dorbeta Herrera since our last cocktail party, and I often wonder what happened to her. A short three years later, I escaped Cuba and fled to this country seeking asylum; I keep in touch with Alandra and Gotzone and both are doing well. From time to time I still catch myself singing along to a tune on the radio, trying to keep the overall rhythm of a song in mind while I pick out each instrument’s contribution. At 83, I’m still a work in progress, but the lives of these five women have left an indelible mark on me. I hope their story leaves a mark on you as well.

As Nelly wrapped up her story, no one at the table spoke. Billy had wiped a tear from his eye while he sipped his beer and Carol sighed heavily. I hadn’t realized it earlier but Nelly had ordered a passion fruit mojito. She noticed me looking at her drink, picked her own glass up and spoke. “I propose a toast — to old friends and to new. A few short hours ago we too were strangers, each different but yet we still shared a common goal: baseball and the need to get to
Boston. Well, we’re here! What a trip it has been. May this day and the stories be shared never be forgotten. SALUD!” As we toasted one another, smiles crept across everyone’s faces. I took just a moment to take that scene in before Brian interrupted the flow of the moment.

“Hey — who wins? Who told the best story??” he asked of me. I was enjoying the moment so much that I had forgotten about the competition. Thinking for a few moments, I cleared my throat and spoke to the group.

“Fellow travelers, and friends. It occurs to me that I did in fact promise chowder and beer for the best story and that I owe each of you the courtesy of informing you of who that is. My dilemma is that I simply cannot decide. Each of you have told stories that were heartfelt, funny and unique. Each of you has made a contribution to a much larger work than any of us set out to accomplish. It is precisely because of the stories you all told that this journey has been a fantastic one. Therefore, I’m buying dinner and drinks for all! I look forward to sharing the last of our time together before we head to Fenway. Eat, drink and be merry!”

With that, a fantastic meal was shared by all. The chowder was hot, the beer cold and the stories cool. We finished our meal and made the final leg of our journey to the stadium. As we entered the park, we said our farewells and began to split up to find our seats. Billy and Carol went one way and Brian, Vinny and Nelly the other. The game was unremarkable as baseball went, but the journey couldn’t have been better. We had finished our tour of baseball stadiums, having visited all 30. We had eaten the oddest of things all across the country and spent many a night partaking in the culture of our host city. In the end however, it wasn’t baseball that really united us. It wasn’t chowder or Sam Adams. No, it was the journey. This was always about the journey, and I can think of no better way for this journey to end.
“Wow, Grandpa, that was really fun!” Frankie yelled. He turned to face George who had placed the book down on the couch next to them. Frankie put his arms around George and gave him a big hug. “I hope that one day I get to take a road trip like that, meet such interesting people and see some baseball. Did you ever do anything like that?” the boy asked.

George smiled and looking Frankie in the eye said, “You betcha, Frankie — and I’d love to take a similar trip with you one day. The snow is already melting and I see signs of spring in the garden. It won’t be long before pitchers and catchers report for training. Whadda you say?” George replied.

Frankie nodded his head up and down repeatedly. “Dad says we have to get going soon — do you mind if I go and play in the snow while there is still some out there?” the boy asked.

“Sure thing — have fun!” George replied. As he got up to check on Leigh, he noticed she was enjoying a conversation with Thomas. He quietly retreated to his study, drew the blinds and sat down in his comfy chair. With Frankie outside and Leigh and Thomas engaged in discussion, George’s mind began to wander once more.

Nelly’s story about the orchestra got George thinking about his time in high school many years ago. He had the chance to meet Leonard Bernstein at Lincoln Center in NYC. Like a typical fifteen year old, George couldn’t appreciate the importance of such an event at the time. His high school English teacher had been personal friends with Mr Bernstein and had arranged for a lunch with the famous conductor. George recalled reading many years later that Mr Bernstein viewed performances as a means to...
feelings, especially with young people who were “eager, unprejudiced, curious, open and enthusiastic” (Duarte, 2010, p. 189) and felt a sense of remorse that he did not appreciate his chance encounter with the famous conductor.

George thought some more about the character of Ms. Damita Rodríguez from Nelly’s tale. He wondered about the role of the conductor in the orchestra and the challenges that person must face. In particular he thought about how he had in many ways been a conductor of sorts throughout his life. George was raising a family while working full time and going to school part time. Like the sections of the orchestra, George had to pay attention to each part of his life while also ensuring they all complimented one another accordingly. He knew he didn’t always get it all correct, but he had tried his best and became better at it over time. He knew that Ms. Rodríguez’s ability to integrate her formal learnings and those of her experiences separated her from others as conductor and George began to wonder if his adoption of a similar mindset had helped him be successful thus far in life.

George vividly remembered exploring the concepts of The Opposable Mind by Roger Martin (2009) and how the author talked about several concepts that had a meaningful impact on George. Martin spoke of three parts of what he defined as one’s personal knowledge system and he called it “integrated thinking” (Martin, 2009). First, the author used the term “stance” to represent “who you are in the world and what you are trying to accomplish in it” (Martin, 2009, p. 93). George liked this term and the fact that Martin had described it as possessing “both individual unique elements and shared cultural and community aspects” (Martin, 2009, p. 96). George recalled the second element in Martin’s framework: tools. Tools were devices that helped one understand
one’s world and organize one’s thinking (Martin, 2009) and included things like theories, processes, and rules of thumb. The final part of Martin’s framework was experiences, or as the author put it so eloquently, “where stance and tools meet the world” (Martin, 2009). Such experiences gave one the ability to hone skills (the capacity to carry out an activity and produce a consistent result) and sensitivities (the ability to make distinctions between two events that are similar but not exact) and were responsible for forming one’s most practical and tangible knowledge about the world lived in (Martin, 2009). Together, these three components helped George adopt a worldview that preferred to think in terms of “A and B” instead of “A or B”. George knew how an attitude of “A or B” often resulted in a mindset of choosing between “us and them” and the pain that such a condition often presented (Sacks, 2017). George preferred to focus on Martin’s model, integrating A and B together, strengthening what Martin called our stance in life.

The more George thought of the importance of adopting an integrated thinking mindset, the more he realized it served as a central tenet to many of the things George knew and cared about. He found this theme showing up again and again, as he scanned the mental notes of the books he had read over the years. He thought about how at its core, integrated thinking required the integration of mastery and originality. Martin (2009) saw mastery as an enabler for originality which in turn was a generative condition for originality. The two concepts were related, for without originality mastery would become rote. Likewise, originality without mastery would be random (Martin, 2009). Similar ideas would be espoused in the work of Adam Grant (2017) and Johansson (2017). George began to see the application of integrated thinking as a master frame for understanding most of what he had been learning all his life.
As he thought about this topic some more, he remembered reading about examples detailed by Kelley & Littman (2006) who, when describing an example of a specific innovation, recalled how a team was able to design a solution to a problem using integrated thinking. George even recalled a comment in a book on leadership about how quiet leaders tended to avoid either-or-thinking (Badaracco, 2002), recognizing the complexity such situations possess requires some imagination to overcome. Closer to home, he thought about Thomas once more as he prepared to leave with Frankie. He thought about the decision Thomas had made about pursuing an opportunity he had in front of him, and how paradoxical two contradictory propositions can often look when viewed through a “one or the other” lens (McAdams, 1993). George’s thought of Thomas prompted him to go and check on Leigh and Thomas, as well as Frankie, as all had been quiet in the home. Taking a peek in the adjacent room, George found Leigh and Thomas were still chatting. Frankie was sitting at the dining room table with a cup of cocoa, cheeks still red from the snow outside. Content, George returned again to continue his thinking session.

Progressing through Martin’s model once more, George thought about the importance of experience in building resilience. He had spent the last two days reviewing some of the more challenging times in his life and had learned to appreciate all of the difficulties he had faced when he had taken the time to reflect upon them. George thought about all the brain-storming efforts he had undertaken throughout his life, both at work and at home. When he faced a problem he could not easily overcome, George would often think about creative solutions. These “virtual experiences” that took place entirely in George's mind were very much like the real ones in his life. George had
learned that “visualizing hundreds of scenarios in which you handle tough situations will build a rock-solid platform to help you reach your goal” (Poscente, 2004, p. 93) and he used such processes effectively. Not being able to creatively look for an answer to a problem would mean settling at times for the lesser of two evils, and George didn’t like this premise. He thought about the paradoxical nature in which competing thought processes could manifest themselves to someone who could not use the integrated thinking framework successfully. George approached the bookcase and searched for the smallest of books on his shelf. Turning to a dog-eared page in David Davalos’ Wittenberg, George sat down again to read. He smiled as he read the following exchange between John Faustus and Rev. Martin Luther, both directed at Hamlet:

Faustus: After all, there really is no “good” nor “bad”, but thinking makes it so
Luther: You must be a faithful servant of the Lord.
Faustus: You must serve nothing but your own judgment.
Luther: God has given you a true soul — you have a responsibility to save it
Faustus: Fate has given you a good mind — you have a responsibility to use it

(Davalos, 2012, p. 50)

George chuckled at this exchange as he often had, as he knew of course that poor Hamlet must have been thoroughly confused and exhausted by it all. George had learned over his lifetime that seeing all sides of a story, argument, or position was key to finding the proper solution. He also was wise enough to learn to focus on those parts of his world he could control, practicing acceptance and searching for ways to compensate for those parts he did not. Like the example Stanley McChrystal had provided in his work, “if we cannot control the volatile tides of change, we can learn to build better boats”
“Come on, Frankie — grab your bags, Buddy, we have to head out,” Thomas yelled across the room. The sound of footsteps followed as Frankie scammed upstairs. George knew he had just a few minutes left before his son and grandson would leave. As he rose from his chair to reshelve the Davalos book, his thoughts drifted once more to Martin’s work. Martin had taught George how to deal with opposing ideas, with concepts held in dynamic tension. On the subject, Martin wrote about how “opposing models, in fact, are the richest source of new insight into a problem” (Martin, 2009, p. 124). Adjusting one’s thinking to see the world you know as “one of many, all of them imperfect” (Martin, 2009, p. 124) leads one to operate in an environment where clashes are inevitable. It changes one’s mindset from examining this state of affairs as one to be feared and makes it one to embrace. Like the conductor who needed to keep the entire piece in mind while conducting, integrated thinking had taught George to keep the larger problem in mind while working out the details of specific portions of it. George had learned complexity brings along opportunities for breakthroughs to occur, and that the “integrative thinker will always search for creative resolutions of tensions, rather than accept unpleasant trade-offs” (Martin, 2009, p. 43). This model had been the cornerstone of George’s thinking, had been the theme of George’s chat with Thomas, and ideally would be a seed planted in young Frankie for future use.

“See you later, Pal,” George said to Frankie as he patted him on the head. Leigh had already said goodbye to both Thomas and Frankie while George was finishing up his thoughts in the next room. George thought it fitting that Frankie no longer had his winter hat on, but instead wore a Red Sox cap. Crouching over, George gave Frankie a hug and
kiss goodbye. Turning to Thomas, he opened his arms and embraced his son. “Good luck Tommy — I know you’ll make the right choice. If you want to chat about it, give me a holler,” George said. Thomas smiled, gave his father a hug and began to walk out.

“Hey, Dad,” Thomas said turning around. “What was that book you were reading to Frankie?” he asked.

George smiled, “Just a collection of stories about some people on a road trip — I think he liked it,” George said in return. Thomas nodded, giving his dad a sly look as he turned to place his belongings in the car. George and Leigh stood arm in arm as they watched their son and grandson drive away.
THE CASTLEBURY TALES: CHAPTER TWELVE

Walking back through the living room as the door closed, George noticed he had left *The Castlebury Tales* open from when he and Frankie had finished it. Reaching for the book and closing it once more, a smile crept across George’s face. George had become quite familiar with the work in this book, having read it many times over the years. There was, of course, another reason for his familiarity and adoration. Opening the book once more to the title page revealed what Frankie had not noticed earlier. Below an icon in the shape of a cross that bore the letters *AMDG* for *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* was the name of the author:

![The Castlebury Tales](image)

This work had been George’s first publication. George had chosen to publish the book under his full, legal name rather than the more colloquial middle name he preferred when in conversation with family and friends. *The Castlebury Tales* told of George’s
experiences over his life. The AMDG reference was included in reverence to the primary principle instilled in him as a young man by the Jesuits, and was the source of inspiration for the character’s names in the very last tale of the book.

Based on key learnings from his time at The University of Pennsylvania, George used the frame story format to tell the stories of the imagoes (McAdams, 1993) he himself had discovered during this period of his life. Inspired by many of the authors he had read, students he met along the way, and professors he interacted with and learned from, George wrote the book as a way of articulating the principles important to him in life. As he told a colleague years ago, George related to something he once read in Joseph Badaracco Jr.’s work: “As I got older, I realized that maintaining one’s integrity and principles are the essence of maintaining one’s soul” (Badaracco, 2002, p. 98). It was for this purpose that George created this work to begin with. He hoped it would inspire others to do the same, or at the very least be helpful to friends and family who sought to deepen their relationship with George. By the conversations he had experienced over the past 72 hours with Frankie and Thomas, George knew he had succeeded.

As Thomas departed just minutes earlier, George had felt a mix of emotions. He was incredibly grateful for the time he had with Frankie, and for the discussion he and Thomas had the night he arrived back in the family home. He had missed that style of discussion with his son, and knew it was long overdue. On the other hand, George was sad. He had been able to spend the last three days with his grandson, a child in whom George frequently recognized traces of himself. Frankie’s departure was bittersweet and left George with a twinge of sadness. In all, the word that best described the scene and
the swell of emotions was *poignant*. It was this subtle combination, composed largely of elation with the smallest degree of sadness that helped make this moment poignant for George (Pink, 2018). George knew that the past three days were a roller coaster of emotions for him, and he was thankful for the time he had been given. Although he spent much time reminiscing about days of old, George was also wise enough to know that the real value of the past three days would only increase over time, and with proper reflection. Like Frankl, Duarte, Palmer, Bridges and so many of the authors he had read, and the relationships he had forged over his life, George really only knew one thing. As he prepared to face a new day, the sun’s rays slowly melted the snowfall outside, in turn revealing the smallest of tips in the ivy George had planted so long ago. George felt encouraged; he also knew that the current day was a gift, and began to wonder if that is why it was called *the present* after all.
APPLICABILITY OF THIS WORK

The overall format of The Castlebury Tales and the reason I chose the frame story structure for this Capstone is the result of three years of reading, writing and dialoguing that occurred throughout my time at Penn. While it’s difficult to identify one specific class or author, I have identified the work of several authors as being instrumental in the formation of the guiding framework of this paper. Likewise, the details of this Capstone result from my interactions at Penn with faculty and fellow students, and as a result of purposeful reflection.

It is my sincere desire that the impact of storytelling as an art and the understanding of its influence on my thinking be clear at this point in my Capstone. While it’s difficult to identify one specific source, I lean heavily on the work of Jonah Sachs (2012) and on the archetypes he describes. Sachs calls out the need to “uncover” rather than choose” such archetypes, as “this process of deeply observing both who you are as a brand and who aspire to be” are both critical. Dan McAdams uses the term imagoes to describe these archetypes and they play a central theme in the stories told in the frame story of The Castlebury Tales. Sachs describes the attributes of each archetype in his work, identifying both their values and their shadow side, a reference to how each might be misinterpreted. I used Sachs’ archetypes to build some of the narrators of the tales, and others to describe the characters of each tale.

Sachs (2012) identifies the pioneer as one who is comfortable with exploration and malcontent with staying home. I incorporated this concept into the larger frame story of the baseball road trip journey, but it also represents who I am as a person. I’ve rarely
been satisfied with the status quo, and have looked for new areas to grow into for most of my life. It was this desire that brought me to apply to Penn’s OD program years ago. Penn’s program has given me more confidence to do the same in the future. The tools and techniques I have been exposed to, and the relationships I have formed with faculty and students alike are invaluable to me. Sachs (2012) calls out that the pioneer often fixates on newness. I’ve learned that the value of reflection and “fuzzy vision”, along with the creation of and maintenance of a personal Board of Directors to help one stay on the correct path, has helped me from straying too far into the shadows.

Sachs (2012) talks about the rebel next, and this is one I see largely in myself in real life (Sachs, 2012, p. 171). As mentioned, Penn has given me the confidence I need to focus on the creative destruction, and not chaos, that may result from this archetype. I think about the creative ways I was able to express myself in various classes. Through writing about Dante meeting the time traveling Robert De Niro in DYNM551: The Devil’s Advocate: The Power of Divergent Thinking and creating a board game as a final deliverable, I learned that unorthodox approaches to demonstrating knowledge, and making an impression, were welcomed. I quickly developed a skill to make movie trailers using Apple’s iMovie platform with the sole purpose of creating a trailer for a project in DYNM616 Myths to Media: Stories on a Mission. Realizing the value that creativity could bring to others, I formalized this work as an Independent Study completed with Janet Greco (DYNM699 Independent Study on the Creative Use of Multimedia), exploring multimedia techniques that could be beneficial to others facing similar assignments. I took this sense of “rebelsness” with me when I made a career transition around the same time, creating iMovies and Photoshop memes regularly as a
way of both driving change and building culture. During this time the magician archetype (Sachs, 2012) would emerge as one who was “creative, irreverent and energetic”. Working with two colleagues, I volunteered to lead a session at our sales kickoff in early 2020, leading a 90 minute session on influence, drawing heavily on the work of Cialdini (2007) — a text discovered in DYNM612: Mastering Organizational Politics and Power (John Eldred). The session was well attended (by more than 100 people) and was given high marks for its effectiveness and creativity.

In perhaps the boldest move I’ve made, I created a printed book that embodied our culture as a team and as an organization complete with illustrations done by a former classmate. The printed book was given to all members of the team and to the executives of the firm, including the CEO and Chairman. I personally handed these books to as many of the executives as I could, using the opportunity to introduce myself and shake hands in a pre-COVID world. Penn helped me recognize that creating and distributing these books was an opportunity to influence and I took full advantage of it. DYNM603: Leading Emergence- Creating Adaptive Space in Response to Complex Challenge (Michael Arena) and John Eldred’s politics class were instrumental in my thinking to take such a risk; my successes at Penn in the OD program inspired the confidence to do so.

Sachs (2012) talks about the jester archetype as one who marries fun with intelligence, and one who is “extremely brave, unafraid to hold a mirror up to the powerful” (Sachs, 2012, p. 172). I choose to identify with this archetype and believe the characters in The Castlebury Tales do as well. This style of writing was heavily influenced by the work of Poscente (2006). My exit from the insurance company that I
worked for when I started my Penn journey was partly due to my willingness to stand up to power. In the end, I was let go following a merger. This event was painful but my experiences at Penn helped me not only get through this difficult time, but also helped me land the role I currently have.

The captain archetype is one Sachs (2012) describes as always interested in the truth. Billy’s tale in the larger Castlebury Tales frame story featured a captain at the helm of a ship for this reason. Sachs writes that the captain’s “greatest strength comes from the trust you inspire,” (Sachs, 2012, p. 173) and I have worked hard to do just that in my personal and professional life. I despise tyrannical behavior as evidenced in the main character of Vinny’s story, modeled after a tyrant I worked for in my career. When it comes to truth, I often struggle with the tension in life between doing that which is dogmatic and holding true to my pragmatic ideals. I keep an artifact on my desk that bears these two concepts in all of their “dynamic tension glory” that I created in DYNM606: Leading from the Center: Unleashing Your Leadership Potential (Michael Arena and Sharon Benjamin).

My focus on principles in my life as bedrock is one of the ideals that underpins Sachs’ (2012) defender archetype. I have often described myself as kind, a trait that others would be foolish to misinterpret as weak. The value of justice I maintain is rooted in faith and in leading men and women who have shaped my life. Narrators Vinny, Brian and Carol epitomize these values. The muse is the last of Sachs’ archetypes. My hope is that by now, it is evident that I strive to be unique in how I conduct myself, preferring to provide the type of quiet leadership Badaracco (2002) speaks of over other more upfront styles.
Penn has helped me to learn a series of skills that have left me better prepared for the challenges in the modern day distributed/virtual world. When I consider the volatility and uncertainty COVID has brought to our lives, I consider myself fortunate to have studied Organizational Dynamics at Penn. I believe I was successful in my transition to a virtual organization in mid 2019 because of the tooling and mindset Penn helped me create, and the support I received from my classmates and instructors. No one would have expected the impact that the current pandemic would have on all aspects of life, but my ten-month head start in a virtual organization gave me a much needed advantage. It also prepared me for something I had not expected. As the world shifted to a virtual organization, I found myself concurrently as a student in this program, an employee of a virtual organization helping clients learn how to work in a distributed world while simultaneously playing the roles of father to four children learning remotely and husband to a teacher now teaching remotely for the first time. As I began to write this Capstone and incorporate the work of McAdams (2006), I recognized that this was a time where imagoes began to shift from the domain of agency to that of community. The combination of my experience and education, what Martin (2009) would call stance, had thrust upon me an opportunity to help others. I would take this opportunity as a form of calling and endeavored to do my best to help all that I could in whatever ways that I could.

I’ve described the work of Jonah Sachs thus far, and alluded to that of Dan McAdams. I want to stay with McAdams (2006) now and unpack the impact of this work further. Both authors helped me to understand the value of stories and the characters that constitute them. In the union of these authors, along with the work of
others such as Hutchens (2015), I found a tool for creating a unified whole with the parts of my Penn journey. I identified with the concepts of the personal myth and imagoes in McAdams (2006) and decided that was how I was going to bring the Capstone ideas together. I needed to do that in a larger story, of course, so the grandfather and grandson story idea was born. McAdams defines six principles for imagoes and I refer the reader to pages 127-132 of his work for detailed descriptions of each. More importantly to me, McAdams defined two distinct types of imagoes, making distinctions between those that were agentic in nature and those that were communal.

Agentic imagoes are those concerned with power, achievement, independence, mastery, and justice (McAdams, 1993). In contrast, communal imagoes concern themselves with love, intimacy, interdependence, responsibility, and care for others. I made a conscious choice to write this Capstone, an agentic act by its nature, with a communal orientation, with a sincere desire that it be of benefit to others. It is in many ways an act 23 years in the making. When I began my career following my undergraduate studies, it was the late 90s and I was obsessed with achievement and earning as much money as I could. The events of my life, many of which I’ve detailed here, changed that over time. No other event taught me more clearly the need for community, although I didn’t yet have the vocabulary to express it as such until now, than becoming a father to four children.

McAdams (2006) introduced the concept of the *generative adult* as one who hopes “to leave a heroic gift for the next generation” (p. 227). The events of my life, now filtered through the tools I’ve learned during my Penn education, along with a series of conscious reflections, have led me to believe that my purpose in life — my primary
role — may be that concerned with raising four excellent, conscientious human beings. It may be that my own personal myth, what McAdams defines as something that is “not a legend or a fairy tale, but a sacred story that embodies personal truth,” (McAdams, 2006, p. 34) is less and less about me individually and more and more about preparing my children for their own life stories and “quests” yet to come. If that is true then the stories and lessons this Capstone holds can play a role in helping my children understand more about who I am, or depending on when it’s read, who their father was. Kelley, & Littman quote Muriel Rukeyser who said it best: “The universe is made of stories, not of atoms” (Kelley, & Littman, 2006, p. 242). I’m grateful to have had the opportunity to learn about the value stories hold in our personal and professional narratives. I see stories now as tools to relate to others, to explain our ideas, and to spark discussions about meaning. McAdams (2006) would argue that midlife is a time for such soul searching as we look for and think more about legacy. I see stories as a way of helping to create that legacy for me.

This Capstone represents my own journey, of discovery through imagoes and archetypes, and of transition from agency to communion. Penn’s role in helping me develop the skills to make sense of the past, present and future is invaluable. I believe that to whom much is given, much is expected. I strive each day to live up the Jesuit ideal of being a “man for others”, to live a life that embodies the salt and light of Matthew 5:13-16. To me, these values represent the ultimate sense of communal imagoes and likely had something to do with my initial pursuit of my studies here at Penn. My experiences led me to apply to Penn in late 2017. The events that occurred between 2018 and 2020 helped shape my views of the world and manage a career
transition as well as a global pandemic. Perhaps it was fate or maybe serendipity, but I found myself in a class on storytelling and how it can be used to make sense of the world we live in when I was suddenly let go from my role at an insurance company in early 2019. The nature of the work we had undertaken in that class, and the support of my classmates and professor, was essential to my mental survival and in many ways for my being offered the role I now hold at my current employer — a role I thoroughly enjoyed. It is ultimately this combination of life experiences, faith, education, travels, etc that have shaped my approach to life, what Martin (2009) would identify as *stance* in his model of integrated thinking.

The process of writing this Capstone was one full of catharsis. The impact of Viktor Frankl has and will continue to be foundational for me. I intend to read Frankl’s work once more, leaning into the words of his text next time as one who examines the structure of his story. I will continue to search for meaning in my own life, and have already begun to do so in a way that relies less and less on an identity that holds work in a prominent spot. I think about the pain involved in the manner in which I left the insurance company, but then again, the good it created in bringing me to this program at Penn.

When I made the decision to continue to pay my own way for my education, as my current employer does not offer tuition reimbursement like the last did, I did so after much reflection. I know that I made the right choice to continue my education and one only has to look at the major themes I’ve been able to extract from my time at Penn as expressed in the *PennVenn* (Appendix B) to understand why. It was during that decision process that I often fiddled with the “dogmatic/pragmatic” rock from DYNM606, and
with the Howard Thurman quote George handed to Thomas in the dialogue sequence between father and son — an artifact from the same class. It was those same artifacts that helped me solidify my decision to take a calculated risk in moving to the small start-up, the virtual organization where I now thoroughly enjoy working a full year later. I did so with enthusiasm and with confidence, minimizing worry in the process. As Cohen & Bradford wrote about in a text assigned in DYNM612, a class I took just a few months after I started my new role, “worrying extensively about risk decreases your chance of being successful” (Cohen & Bradford, 2012, p. 184). I couldn’t agree more.

I’ve described the tools and frameworks I’ve developed over my Penn education, where it’s left me today and how it’s helped me make sense of the past. But what of the future? I’ve described how I hope this work can be useful to fellow students here at Penn, as well as to the value I believe it will hold in the hands, hearts and minds of my children. I think about how something similar, written by my father, would be helpful to me even to this day. My father is in his seventies and in moderate health. While he possesses the physical capacity to hold a conversation, he does not possess the will to do so. This has led to a struggle in my own life to relate to him in a meaningful way. While seemingly negative at face value, it has made me determined not to repeat the same scenario with my own children. Like George in The Castlebury Tales, I too hope and pray that I can enjoy the type of relationship I yearn for with my own Thomases and perhaps even my own Frankies one day. This document will serve a purpose in helping them understand more about me, and in the process themselves. I often wonder how I show up as a character in the stories others are writing. Am I close to the positive traits Sachs outlines in his archetypes or have I strayed into the shadows? Am I seen as agentic
by others, even though I see my own actions as communal? How do my children see me, and what will they become? As psychologist Erik Erikson said, I am what survives me (McAdams, 1993).

I began my time at Penn in this program thinking that I wanted to make a career change, to move into a role that was closely aligned to that of executive coach. I struggled to find ways to make such a transition before I realized I was looking at the problem all wrong. As I progressed through the program, I learned of the work of Roger Martin (2009) and integrated thinking. I realized that I had viewed the challenge of how to apply my OD learnings through the traditional Western educational model of “finding a single correct answer” (Martin, 2009, p. 126). As my knowledge of OD continued to expand, I discovered that the skills I had been developing were better applied with my current knowledge rather than in place of it.

I began to think of my current Information Technology field as if it were a 50-pound weight in a health club. OD to me took on the identity of the physical trainer who worked in that environment, that knew how to use those weights to teach others how to keep themselves healthy. OD was additive in nature, not a replacement. While anyone could walk-in and lift weights on their own, everyone could benefit from the expertise of someone who could marry the tools available with the knowledge of how to create lasting impact and change. OD is that set of tools, conventional and non, that is to be used for engaging, influencing and motivating others. This epiphany led me to look at my Penn education as something to be used to further what Martin (2009) called stance, or the way in which someone looked at the world. I viewed OD as a means to helping myself become what Kelley and Littman would describe as “T-shaped” individuals, those that
enjoyed a “breadth of knowledge in many fields, but they also have depth in at least one area of expertise” (Kelley and Littman, 2006, p. 75). Penn has helped me extend the horizontal portions of this T-shape. This is important and valuable to me. As Kelley and Littman conclude on the last page of their work, “We believe the future belongs to T-shaped people. And it’s not easy to replace a T-shaped person. The broader your talents, the more your ability lies in the overlaps between disciplines, the less likely you will find yourself outsourced” (Kelley and Littman, 2006, p. 266). I believe many of the sources cited in this Capstone, including Adam Grant, Frans Johansson and Roger Martin, would agree.

To Penn OD students, I encourage everyone who is at the stage of their program where they are considering their Capstone topic to also consider the process they intend to use. Appendix A depicts what I would call the heavy lifting phase of my research. I’ve described the source of these notes in a previous section, each one selected from a reference in the Reference List of this work. I found the work of Nancy Duarte (2010) and that of Hutchens (2015) to be extremely useful in helping create and refine the concepts that ultimately wound up in this finished narrative. I particularly liked Duarte’s thoughts on idea collection and creation, contained on page 98 of her work. Coupled with a concept I’ve deemed Don’t be afraid to kill your darlings, but best to let them sit on death row first, this process was instrumental in my writing. Nearly 500 ideas were initially captured on stickies, but in the end around half of that number were used as citations in this text. Some of the ideas I initially had cast aside I wound up reusing. Those that remain may still serve a potential future purpose so I’m holding on to them for now.
My second piece of advice is be patient and persistent — write every day. There were days in the process where I wrote nothing of value and it frustrated me. There were also days where I would sit down and wind up skipping meals, writing for five or more hours. Edits were constant, both my own and those from suggestions of others. Not all made it into this text, but each had value.

On a mechanical note, I used Google Docs as it facilitated sharing and correspondence in the COVID-19 world of 2020 in which this was written. I paid the fees for EasyBib as well, and recommend you consider it as it helped me remain in the flow while writing. I used comments in Google docs to store page numbers for references in case I needed to go back.

My final piece of guidance: do something fun. This process is long and arduous. Like a good movie, I laughed and I cried along the way. For me, this was cathartic work and I’m proud of the end product.
INSPIRATION FOR THE CASTLEBURY TALES

Each story in The Castlebury Tales was inspired by someone in my life, or in some cases a series of people. Each of the six stories represents a story in my own life, as told by George (the older version of myself) to Frankie (who represents both the younger, curious me as well as the version of me before I began my studies at Penn) and in The Castlebury Tales themselves through the eyes of the unnamed narrator, representing me at the current time. The Castlebury Tales are my tales. I am George, and Leigh is my wife. I am also Thomas and Frankie. In addition to being the younger version of myself, Frankie is also a composite character of my own four children.

Twelve chapters make up The Castlebury Tales. I chose to organize the material into twelve chapters in reverence to the original twelve Apostles. Each of the stories in the main body takes on a meaning drawn from the PennVenn (see Appendix B), exemplifying a key theme (or themes) from my educational experience. I say educational experience as the story themes are a combination of direct lessons drawn from courses, as well as the events in my life between 2018-2020, my years in the Penn OD program. Although six stories are included in this Capstone many more remain to be written. I have tried to be descriptive in how I’ve told the stories to both draw the reader in more fully, but also in recognition of the level of detail I was taught to observe as part of my learnings in DYNM651.

In the spirit of McAdams’ imagoes, each story is told by someone who stands in for an imago in my life. Like McAdams’ imagoes, my imagoes are both factual and aspirational in nature. Each imago represents what McAdams defines as internalized
complexes of actual or imagined persons (McAdams, 1993). I chose each story based on the lesson(s) learned from Penn and crafted it through the eyes of an imago from my own life. Reflections throughout The Castlebury Tales serve to reinforce the imagoes as a whole, as well as introduce additional imagoes (like the ritualist in chapter five) where they fit the narrative, or in some cases where I want the narrative to go. I believe this dynamic to be a more consistent representation of reality, as together the sum of the imagoes makes up my personality and the principles I maintain, while individually each makes sense only in a broader, holistic context in which an imago emerges.

This section will provide the metadata for each story chosen in order to aid the reader in understanding “George’s reflections”. For each story, character inspirations are included along with explanations of any imagery I chose to include in The Castlebury Tales. A direct connection to the courses at Penn is included for the reader who may wish to develop his/her own version of this experience at Penn or for those interested in the full reading list associated with each course.

**PROLOGUE**

**Narrator**
Unnamed but in the end revealed to be me.

**Imago(es):**

The *traveler* imago began to emerge in me at an early age, most likely as I traveled from my home in Hoboken, NJ to high school in Greenwich Village, NYC. I traveled to Mexico on some missionary work as part of a University effort as an undergrad and my wife and I went to Madrid for our honeymoon. A large percentage of my international travel came during my time at BlackRock. In twelve years, I spent time in Scotland, London, Rome, Prague, Munich, Singapore, India, Thailand and Indonesia.
Domestically, I began traveling with my friends for baseball and with my family for vacation. Post BlackRock travel included limited trips to CT, and now with Tanium I’ve traveled a little more in the months leading up to COVID-19. I’m reminded of the words from Davalos’ Wittenberg (2012) when Faustus says to Luther, “The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page” (p. 14). I’m fortunate to have been given the chance to travel as much as I have, and I know it has enhanced my stance (Martin, 2009) used in life.

**Relevant notes for this story**

Imagery in general is important to me and I make extensive use of images throughout the work, starting with the contrast in the setting of *The Castlebury Tales* (summer/warm/full of life) and the setting of the frame story and reflections that contain it (winter/cold/barren). As the storm shows signs of receding around the midpoint of the story and the sun appears, signs of life are seen once again in the form of ivy, an homage to Penn itself. Wherever possible, I also tried to create parallels with the state of the fire, which ranged from roaring to dying down, through the various reflections and dialogues. Finally, I have tried to craft stories where there is interplay or tension between agentic and communal imagoes wherever possible.

**Key Penn courses that influenced this theme:**
DYNM616 *Myths to Media: Stories on a Mission* (Janet Greco)

**Additional Details**

Like the Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales*, I chose to set up the master frame story itself using the premise of a baseball trip. I have been taking similar trips with my core group of friends since 2003. We chose baseball purely for its accessibility and for
the variety of locations that it would bring us. The springtime air of games provides a wonderful setting for fellowship, and serves as a stark contrast to the cold, blustery winter we find grandpa and grandson in. Palmer (2000) provided the inspiration for seasonality and the dynamic tension inherent in the spring/winter tuple in his work. On seasonality, Palmer writes about how “nature teaches a steady lesson: if we want to save our lives, we cannot cling to them but must spend them with abandon” (Palmer, 2000, p. 105). This phrase resonated with me, as I have chosen to adapt a *carpe diem* approach to life, based in large part on my life experiences (many of which are shared in this document). On the subject of spring, Parker writes about how the “muddy mess” that often precedes spring promotes the very conditions that enable the rebirth we witness in spring itself. On winter, Palmer describes how this time of “dormancy and deep rest are essential to all living things” (Palmer, 2000, p. 101) and in doing so describes the perfect setting for George’s reflections. Finally, Parker pulls the seasonal analogy together for me when describing the dynamic tension between them he writes, “Split off from each other, neither darkness nor light is fit for human habitation. But if we allow the paradox of darkness and light to be, the two will conspire to bring wholeness and health to every living thing” (Palmer, 2000, p. 100). It is this tension where the stories of the spring baseball road trip create the events that are accessible to the reflections borne in the cold and darkness of winter, yet still in front of the warmth of the fire, a recurring symbol used throughout.

The baseball backdrop, like Chaucer’s meeting at a tavern, sets up the story that holds all other stories under the guise of a prize being awarded for the best story told. Unlike the characters in Chaucer’s work, those in *The Castlebury Tales* are composed of
groups of friends. Each member of the party knows at least one other. The three groups are those of my age (Mike and the narrator), those who are slightly younger (Billy and Carol) and those who are senior to my demographic (Vinny, Brian and Nelly). I chose to incorporate three distinct demographics as they reflect both my personal and professional circles of friends and colleagues. Seven characters in total went on the journey, reflecting the number of Apostles selected to carry on the ministry of Christ in Acts 6:1-7 as well as the number of gifts from the Holy Spirit. As a parallel, I believe the stories of my life are intertwined in the storytellers I’ve selected. Finally, I’ve used the work of McAdams (2006) and the eight key experiences the author identifies in the interviews he conducted for his work as inspiration for the stories and the lessons they teach.

**STORY ONE: PERSEVERANCE THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES and MORAL COURAGE**

**Narrator**
Vincent Biagi, SJ (Vinny), an influential teacher of mine from Xavier High School who stands for all of the instruction I received at Xavier and Saint Peter’s University — both Jesuit schools. Unlike any other story in *The Castlebury Tales*, this one was modeled after the knight archetype in Chaucer’s work who did in fact go first. Amongst other qualities, Chaucer’s knight embodied principles of loyalty and honor. Ever polite, the knight is always well mannered, never speaking ill of anyone. These ideals were represented in the men and women, lay and ordained, that I had the privilege of being educated by.

*Imago(es): none*

*Relevant notes for this story*
I view soccer as a metaphor to life: it’s a team sport — you can’t win it alone and you need coaching. For the main character Shawn, the realization of purpose occurs following a tragedy. I used this method as it is similar to how Saint Ignatius of Loyola founded *The Society of Jesus*, whose followers use the *SJ* prefix in their titles.

This story serves as the opening, as for me it helps chronicle the challenges that occurred during my Penn journey. These included my departure from Cigna, my transition to Tanium, and the general challenges COVID-19 presented to us all.

**Key Penn courses that influenced this theme:**
DYNM612 *Mastering Organizational Politics and Power* (John Eldred)
DYNM651 *Group & Team Dynamics: Understanding Over and Covert Dynamics Which Support Effective Work* (Dana Kamenstein)

**STORY TWO: DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL MISSION, PRINCIPLES and THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN UNCERTAIN TIMES**

**Narrator**
a composite of two “Williams” in my life

- William C. Dall (Billy), a childhood friend who died of cancer at age 40
- Dr. William Cole-Kiernan, the professor who introduced me to John Dewey, William James and the American philosophy of Pragmatism

**Imago(es):**
McAdams (2006) writes how the best of friends are often those formed in the years of puberty, and how true friendships in adolescence and adulthood are tougher. I am fortunate to have had many friendships develop in those days of puberty that continue to this day. These are the foundations of the *friend* imago that appears in this story.
The storyteller imago is embodied in both the story Billy tells, as well as in my reservation of the narrator role for myself throughout The Castlebury Tales. The storyteller has been an imago that has been present for most of my life but has chosen to express itself more heavily in the past several years.

I have learned to embrace the creative side of my life more and more over the past several years, as represented by the creator imago. While this imago was not as evident professionally until I joined Tanium in 2019, I don’t believe that’s a coincidence. I distinctly remember sitting in 616 offering creative solutions to challenges presented. With newfound confidence and encouragement, I continued to express my creative abilities when I joined Tanium around the same time, producing a short iMovie at the end of my first week and sharing it with my peers and leaders. Work completed in 551 by a classmate, Emily, would also serve as inspiration for the creation of a physical book that identified qualities of the Tanium team I belonged to; I even had Emily draw pictures for it. I presented hard copies of the book to leads of the team, along with several executives including the co-founders who still serve as CEO and Chairman. When a second creative approach was used to meet a requirement in 551, the ideas behind my independent study (DYNM699) became crystallized. The work completed in 699 was agentic in nature but also communal; that realization led me to the work of McAdams which had a profound impact on me and consequently on the structure of this work.

I see the sculptor imago in me working in the medium of people, not clay. As a sculptor, I try to shape the organizations I work in to be pliable and more flexible in their thinking. Drawing primarily on the impact of (Martin, 2009) and integrated thinking, I consider myself an independent, non-conforming thinker who is naturally curious and at
times, rebellious. The role of this imago is the creation of what Adam Grant refers to as one who doesn’t “stop at introducing originality into the world” but rather to be *one of them* that can help “create cultures that unleash originality in others” (Grant, 2017, p. 209).

**Relevant notes for this story**

Billy Dall could make up stories that sounded convincing — one of my first experiences with the role of storyteller, Billy taught me both how to ad lib and how to find humor in the everyday. His story in *The Castlebury Tales* epitomizes Billy’s level of creativity. The name of the boat as the *S.S. Dilly Ball*, it’s loss under tragic circumstances, and its role in so many of the stories of my life is a tribute to Billy Dall.

Dr. Cole-Kiernan was an inspiration to me. In addition to helping me learn how to appreciate the writings of Pierce, Dewey and William James, Dr. Cole-Kiernan shared stories that were extremely personal in nature with our class, including the death of his own son by suicide. Coupled with my own retreat experiences, I learned to appreciate the importance of vulnerability and impact that comes along with it. Dr Cole-Kiernan was also the man who introduced me to Viktor Frankl. Along with Albert Ellis, who I came to know of during my study of psychology, Dr. Cole-Kiernan helped form the introspective qualities that are part of the man I am today.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit and foundations of the principles I maintain today are largely attributed to my years at Xavier High School, named for Saint Francis Xavier. Xavier left an indelible mark on me, and inspired me at a young age to think about my role in the world and about purpose. McAdams alludes to my thoughts on the impact of
Xavier when he states, “the generative adult nurtures, teaches, leads and promotes the next generation” (McAdams, 1993, p. 228) The men and women at Xavier provided these values to me and I strive to pay that forward for my own children and for others.

The grandson character is named after Saint Francis Xavier as an homage to the impact Xavier High School teachers had on me.

I learned of the VUCA framework while attending the US Army War College in Carlisle, PA as a Distinguished Civilian guest. A friend of mine was a commissioned officer in the Maryland National Guard and was studying for an MS in Strategic Studies in the hopes of being selected as a General Officer. He had an opportunity to nominate a civilian who would engage in a series of seminar style learnings for a four day period, the purpose of which was to give the military officers the perspective of a civilian. He nominated me and I was selected to attend the four day seminar.

I had originally planned to write a separate chapter on the future of virtual organizations and work. As this document came together, it felt out of place. Rather than make it a separate section (as in all honesty it’s probably a separate Capstone and possible topic for future writing), I distilled the points I had collected for the virtual work chapter and folded them into this story. COVID-19 epitomized VUCA and Penn’s OD work is the perfect preparation for such times.

**Key Penn courses that influenced this theme:**
DYNM551 *The Devil’s Advocate: The Power of Divergent Thinking* (Janet Greco)
DYNM606 *Leading From the Center: Unleashing your Leadership Potential* (Sharon Benjamin and Michael Arena)
DYNM612 *Mastering Organizational Politics and Power* (John Eldred)
DYNM616 *Myths to Media: Stories on a Mission* (Janet Greco)
DYNM699 *Independent Study on the Creative Use of Multimedia* (Janet Greco)
STORY THREE: THE VALUE OF REFLECTION & FINDING MEANING

Narrator
Carol Branda (Carol), 2nd grade teacher and later friend

Imago(es):
Carol Branda, along with William Cole-Kiernan and others, have been instrumental in shaping the teacher imago I aspire to be in my life. As I have had the privilege of holding various leadership positions across different firms in my career, and to raise four children, I have seen the teacher imago emerge. Like Charlie (the father) in the story Carol tells, I see this imago in my own life today. I identify with the current role of teacher I am playing in the lives of my children. I also aspire to teach at this point in my life, striving to be like the teachers who have inspired me to do the same.

Relevant notes for this story
George’s reflection for this story in the Capstone is shorter than the others. My rationale for doing so is my belief that the Capstone itself serves the purpose of illustrating the value I place on reflection.

Two of the works that inspired the use of the crab imagery in this story are Chaleff (2002) and Hackman (2002). Chaleff describes the persistence needed to complete a given transformation through the use of an egg analogy. “The struggle is like hatching an egg — a lot of work is done inside the shell where others can’t see it before the first cracks, let alone a hole large enough to step through, appears” (Chaleff, 2002, p. 144). When I couldn’t get the egg analogy to fit a storyline (I tried!), I thought about what other forms of life undergo change that we don’t often see right away; the crab and its molting process provided similar inspiration for this story.
Hackman uses a similar analogy of an egg to describe the structure of a team. The team, Hackman says, is like that of an egg — a “shaping structure within which an organism comes to life” (Hackman, 2002, p. 129). When I connected these two concepts in the brainstorming phase of this project, I realized that the act of fertilization was in some ways akin to the act of reflection. The egg was the stand-in for an experience; the fertilization the act that gave it purpose.

The final note for this section revolves around a decision I reached myself after my first two OD classes at Penn. When I applied to the program, my initial interest lay in moving away from the IT world and into one that more closely aligned with coaching and leadership development. After spending time in class, reading the assigned materials, working through the assignments I began to question this idea, thinking perhaps the OD program would better serve me as an additional lens to the challenges I had been observing in the organizations I worked with. It just so happened that my company was paying for my education and would only fund two courses a year. I had just finished 616 that July and could not take another class until the following calendar year. I would spend the second half of 2018 re-evaluating my decision to abandon IT rather than using OD as an enhancement. It was this period of reflection, of time away from the classwork, that helped crystallize how I could best make use of the investment of time at Penn. I would later learn of Roger Martin’s work on integrated thinking and apply it to how my OD education coursework and experience could be combined in a unique way.

**Key Penn courses that influenced this theme:**
- DYNM606 *Leading From the Center: Unleashing your Leadership Potential* (Sharon Benjamin and Michael Arena)
- DYNM616 *Myths to Media: Stories on a Mission* (Janet Greco)
STORY FOUR: UNDERSTANDING PARADOX and DYNAMIC TENSION

Narrator

Brian Moroney (Brian), high school English teacher who exposed me to fine arts.

As an homage to Brian, who introduced me to Leonard Bernstein at Lincoln Center (which I could not possibly appreciate at the time) and Shakespeare in the pages of Hamlet, Macbeth and King Lear I chose to present Brian’s story as a sonnet.

Imago(es): none

Relevant notes for this story

I wrote this section using both paradox and dynamic tension as I struggled to understand the difference in this program. 651 was challenging for me on multiple levels, including the fact that this course was about 50% complete when COVID-19 hit. In addition to a surge in workload, all classes were moved online at Penn and elsewhere, including for my four children and my wife who works as an elementary school teacher.

This section is relatively short, primarily as I struggled with the material. This subject continues to intrigue me and I plan to revisit it again in the future.

The paradox of boundaries is interesting to me, as it applies to me in perspectives of both father and son. I too had similar challenges with my own father in this regard, and my children continue to push this with me on a daily basis. The comments from Leigh to George are real and reflect what my wife said to me one evening. I think it’s a perfect way to express our relationship and fitting for this section, which is why I chose to include it.

There is perhaps no greater influence from philosophy on me than the work of William James. James was my academic idol, the perfect union of psychology and
philosophy. James’ interests spanned from painting to chemistry in addition to psychology and philosophy. In many ways he exemplifies the role of intersections that Joahansson writes about in *The Medici Effect* (Johansson, 2017). James wrote on many topics that had a profound impact on me but none more so than the work he did on pragmatism. James talks about why pragmatism matters, describing the pragmatic method as one able to settle disputes in a way that might otherwise be impossible (James, 1955). I found such statements then, as I do now, to be profound in their simplicity, a paradox in and of itself.

Key Penn courses that influenced this theme:
- DYNM606 *Leading From the Center: Unleashing your Leadership Potential* (Sharon Benjamin and Michael Arena)
- DYNM651 *Group & Team Dynamics: Understanding Over and Covert Dynamics Which Support Effective Work* (Dana Kamenstein)

**SECTION BETWEEN STORIES FOUR AND FIVE - THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN FATHER/SON**

Imago(es):
Perhaps the most obvious of all imagoes in the larger text, the *father* imago is personified by the role of father I have taken on in life. Besides the obvious applicability of this persona to my own children, I have aspirations that in time this can develop into an imago of a mentor. For now, this imago tries to recognize the differences in each of his children and adapt an approach to helping them that works for each. I endeavor to model this imago in the image of what Cialdini (2007) describes when discussing commitment and consistency. I agree with the author that long-term commitment is more likely to be achieved when rationale for change is communicated as one involving an internal, intrinsic motivator. Modes of external motivation are likely to lead to short-term
compliance which is not advantageous to the development of the child. Like any other parent, this is an ongoing effort for me!

A credit here belongs to Dana Kamenstein who introduced me to the works of Henri Nouwen during one of many discussions we had in the challenging days of COVID-19. I wrote this interaction between father and son into the Capstone in response to what Nouwen writes about. As the son (Thomas) came to visit the father (George), so too am I now in the role of father, not the one who is “called [sic] to come home as the younger or elder son, but to be *there* [sic] as the one to whom the wayward children can return and be welcomed with joy” (Nouwen, 1994, p. 132).

I view the *caregiver* imago as related to that of the teacher imago, yet see it as distinct. I thought of two times in my life when I was presented with unique opportunities to take a new role that would require relocating. The first was prior to moving to Cigna and it was with a firm that would have had me move to Georgia. I had interviewed for the position in person, and my wife and I had begun to look for houses. Cigna came along with a comparable opportunity but did not require relocation. While my time with Cigna was short (three years) and didn’t end the way I would have liked, I’m thankful I took that role. In addition to teaching me important lessons, it left my family intact and ultimately brought me to Penn.

The second opportunity I had is the inspiration for the dialogue Thomas and George have. A few years back, I was offered a role in Malaysia with a salary that was nearly four times what I had been earning. Taking such a role would have been extremely disruptive and would have placed an enormous burden on my wife to raise four children largely on her own. Doing so would have removed our support system of
neighbors and family and in the end, I also turned this one down. I add these comments as I believe this care for others was an imago that began during my high school days, was reinforced in college and in the work done in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) but, and in true fashion, wasn’t revealed to me until I was faced with two professional decisions.

**Relevant notes for this section**
I included this section as a way of introducing a dialogue between father and son. This has several parallels for me that include limited discussions between my own father and me and extensive discussions between my children and me. Like the work Nouwen (1994) describes, I too can relate and identify in myself the roles of the father and son in their dualities. I too am simultaneously son and father, as if a signpost with arrows pointing in multiple directions simultaneously, yet one who himself remains in a fixed location.

This section is also important to the storyline of the broader Castlebury Tales as it demonstrates George’s ability to not only process, reflect, and understand his own experiences but to parlay them into helping others. It’s the first time we see an imago begin to go from agentic to communal, an important step in development and a personal aspiration of mine.

Finally, Thomas’ character is one of middle age, much like myself at the time of writing. McAdams writes about how awareness of our “social clock” becomes more acute at this point in our lives. McAdams (1993) explains that because it is “a set of expectations about age-appropriate transitions, the social clock is the standard against which individuals evaluate the extent to which their lives are on time” (p. 197).
identified this as the proverbial mid-life crisis and although I do not own a fancy sports
car and don’t play golf, I too have had such internal dialogues. I chose to present it here
as an exchange between father and son, not as individuals but as a discussion between the
wise and the less wise, the counselor and the patient, the mentor and the mentee. This
exchange personifies many interactions I’ve had over life where I’ve been able to think
deeply following a prompt from someone I trusted and/or admired.

**STORY FIVE: MANAGING TRANSITIONS**

**Narrator**
Mike is a composite character for 3 childhood friends, ironically all named Mike.

**Imago(es): none**

**Relevant notes for this story**

There was a trio of books I was reading as I made my own transition from an
established Fortune 500 company to a startup in late spring, 2019. Bridges, Palmer and
Pink were all on my nightstand and on my mind. I found the parallels amongst them too
much to be coincidental, and so thought they were of a more serendipitous nature.
What’s interesting is that none of the three were assigned to me in any class I had
currently taken or would take in the future during my time at Penn. I had, however, been
enrolled in Dynamics 551: The Devil’s Advocate and the Power of Divergent Thinking.
I firmly believe this enabled me to embrace the work Bridges, Palmer and Pink write
about so eloquently.

I stayed at the Omni Hotel in Boston years ago and remembered passing the
Parkers Pub restaurant. While not a clam chowder fan myself, I know from locals that
this was the spot for such a bowl of chowder.
My friends and I have done this series of baseball road trips, touring each stadium in the US and Canada over a near fifteen year period. As I write this, we have three stadiums left to visit. We’ve completed this very road trip, driving from Philadelphia to Boston for baseball. In fact, it was the very first game we ever traveled to so it seems fitting that this Capstone would use such a journey. To commemorate the Capstone as the ending of my own journey at Penn, I chose to make this the last stadium stop.

**Key Penn courses that influenced this theme:**

DYNAM616 *Myths to Media: Stories on a Mission* (Janet Greco)

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**STORY SIX: INTEGRATED THINKING**

**Narrator**

Neima Grandela (Nelly)- my mother’s boss for 20+ years. Neima is a woman who was a freedom fighter in the days of Fidel Castro in Cuba, who left behind everything to come to the United States. The four orchestral section leads in the story Nelly tells were all named for their faith-like qualities. The conductor was named Damita, for the meaning of this name, “noble little lady,” personifies who Neima is.

**Imago(es):**

My faith journey has been fairly unique, and as such the student of faith is an imago I identify with. From the earliest days of being loosely Lutheran to my eight years of education by Jesuits that led to my ultimate conversion to Catholicism, faith has played a large role in shaping who I am. When I add the study of philosophy to that mix, the possibilities expand quite a bit. I see the role of integrated thinking as key in my development, but I did not have the framework or language to understand it in that way until now. By combining the key themes of both Martin (2009) and Nouwen (1994), I
too have become both the “prodigal son” and “the father” as I minister and guide my own children in the faith. McAdams (1993) quotes author James Fowler when describing the nature of people to “ascribe some kind of order or pattern to the universe and to live according to the ascription” (p. 179) and I struggle with this concept. Faith remains a bedrock principle of who I am but I also believe in free will and choice. My education has taught me the values of being a man for others and caring for fellow man, ideas I see reflected in the work of Grant (2014) in Give and Take in the archetypes of giver and matcher. I see parallels in the work of Kelley & Littman (2006) and McAdams (2006), in the value mixed personas and imagoes (respectively) can bring when brought under Martin’s unifying integrated thinking whole. Finally, the words of Luther to Hamlet in Davalos’ (2012) creative masterpiece Wittenberg ring true that “faith without struggle comes too cheaply” (p. 43). This process has helped me find the positive in the seemingly negative events of my life, and for this I am forever grateful.

I suppose after twenty-three years (and counting) of formal education, the perpetual student imago fits me as well as any other. For more than half of my life (at time of writing) I have been a formal student, engaged in some way in the pursuit of knowledge. Outside the formal classroom, my interests have varied widely over the course of my life. It is for this reason that I identify with Johansson (2017), who wrote of how “broad education and self-education, then, appear to be two keys to learning differently” (p.51). I named the character of Frankie after Saint Francis Xavier and in the spirit of my own children, who I hope and pray continue to develop both forms of education.
Roger Martin (2009) describes the traditional Western model of education as one founded on a ruling theory, one that emphasizes “finding a single right answer” (p. 126). I can identify specific individuals in primary and secondary school that helped shape my early thinking to explore alternatives to this notion of a single truth. Martin (2009) goes on to reference the “fallibilistic stance” (p. 126) of Charles Sanders Pierce, an American philosopher who resonates with me. As an undergraduate who studied Philosophy and was significantly influenced by William James, it seemed fitting that Martin included reference to Pierce. My education taught me to think of James as the link between Pierce and another major contributor to the philosophy of Pragmatism, John Dewey. Each of the fallible models Pierce, and in turn James and Dewey, espoused were viewed as the best for the current situation and each of the men remained open to the notion that in time, they would cease to be relevant.

I believe my interest in the field of Pragmatism as an undergraduate was influenced by key primary and secondary teachers. My interest in Martin’s work was the direct result of both my life experience, my educational foundation (in Psychology, Philosophy and later an MS in Information Systems), and a new found ability to articulate my life experiences through the frameworks I learned and the discussions I had with faculty and classmates here at Penn. My Penn experience in many ways personifies Martin’s message: embracing a growth mindset and making a commitment to always learn (formally and informally) so as to improve the way in which I view the world I live in. Combined with other imagoes I have detailed along this journey, and backed by faith and moral courage, I believe this imago is the primary force in my life and has been for some time.
Relevant notes for this story

I wanted something unifying and comprehensive, but also poignant for the last story. I chose to summarize most of the major themes of the Capstone in Nelly’s story, writing the fictional character Damita with an integrated thinking mindset. As the final story, I thought it important to be comprehensive in summarizing many of the major themes while also introducing the final theme itself - an attempt at true integrated thinking. As Pink (2019) writes, endings are also a great opportunity for poignancy; the ending of this story and *The Castlebury Tales* overall were deliberately intended to create this effect.

This story represents the influence of strong women in my life. Characters used are fictitious and chosen to meet the *AMDG* syntax I was using as a literary device.

I did actually meet Leonard Bernstein as a high school Sophomore. My English teacher, Mr. Brian Moroney, the inspiration for *Brian* in *The Castlebury Tales*, was a personal friend of Mr. Bernstein.

Martin’s work spoke to me in a unique way. When I read Martin in DYNM551, I found a compliment in the work of Kelley & Littman (2006), also from the same course. I see my Penn education as *adding a tool to my organizational swiss army knife*, expanding the capabilities I could bring to an organization. As I was in the midst of my own transition during this time, I committed to trying new things and imagoes, like the creator and storyteller, began to emerge more strongly than they had previously.

Key Penn courses that influenced this theme:
*DYNM551 The Devil’s Advocate: The Power of Divergent Thinking* (Janet Greco)
FINAL THOUGHTS

The stories in this Capstone fit together in a unique way, and in doing so provide a neat summary of the primary lessons I have been able to draw from my education. I have learned about the importance of developing a personal mission based on principles and how that leads to a personal leadership style that is authentic. It is this style that has helped me lead in times of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity as expressed in the reflections within this narrative, and that leaves me feeling prepared to tackle any challenge that may come my way. I have been able to learn from many successful leaders and suffered under the minority that have been less than ideal. Many of the key lessons I have learned throughout are only understood during times of reflection. Reflection for me is born from the desire to find meaning in my life, and this has led me to discover a world full of paradoxes and dynamic tensions. These paradoxes and tensions have given me reason to be further contemplative, to view the world as if through a prism, examining separate waves of light rather than the single unified whole. It is this light that can exist only in concert with the darkness it drives out.

It is through the perseverance we show in difficult times that our character is both refined and revealed. It is this same character, and the principles that underlie it, that enable us to manage the transitions of life both professionally and personally. During times of transition, one who is prepared can lean on a network of peers and friends, to influence outcomes that one may benefit from, and use one’s creativity to stand apart from the crowd. All of the experiences in my life have made me stronger, given me additional perspective. This perspective ultimately allows me to enhance the view I hold
of the world, and the stance I take within it, embracing a growth and integrated thinking mindset.

There is perhaps no better tool to make sense of all that life provides and all that we experience than that of the story. Many of my experiences at Penn made use of story to both convey, interpret and create meaning. I was influenced significantly by the work of David Hutchens (Circle of the Nine Muses), Jonah Sachs (Winning the Story Wars) and Nancy Duarte (Resonate). Resonate provided the inspiration behind the very approach that helped create this unifying work and is quoted in this Capstone. The work of Hutchens and Jonah Sachs was used heavily in the formation of the stories of The Castlebury Tales and the broader frame story where George’s reflections take place, but neither is directly referenced. I have come to develop an understanding of my life through the tools and techniques I have learned and through the interactions I have had with classmates and professors here at Penn.

I have discovered the role of imagoes in not only crafting a life story, but in making sense of it. I have come to appreciate the roles of both agentic and communal imagoes (McAdams, 1993) and hope that this work may be viewed as a tool used to turn the value I derived from my education into something others can learn from. In doing so, I will have taken steps to view this experience as one both agentic and communal, and in doing so embracing Roger Martin’s integrated thinking framework. It is my sincere hope that my story has as much of an impact on you, the reader, as the experience of writing it has had on me. At the start of this Capstone, I quoted author Dan Pink (2018). Dan was correct in his description of writing as “an act of discovering what you think and what you believe” (p. 218). If I am successful in what I have set out to do (if this agentic
document can serve communal purposes) then in a very real way this Capstone, and the thoughts within it, will serve as a symbol of my life and how it has been enhanced by my education at Penn.
REFERENCES


150

from https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/6812-life-can-only-be-understood-backwards-but-it-must-be


APPENDIX A: REFERENCE/RESEARCH PROCESS

SETTING UP THE PROCESS: While reading each text throughout the program, I took notes on the inside covers of each assigned book I read. The note referenced a page and my thoughts at the time of initial reading. The references were used for constructing any writing assignment due in an individual class. I did not have the idea for this Capstone until well into my program, so the notes were generic in nature and meant to be used as my own index/table of contents into the books I was reading.

When my Capstone idea began to take shape, I started reviewing all of the books I had read for the Penn courses I completed, along with others I had read in the past for personal pleasure. It’s worth noting that the notation structure used in the Penn assigned books is the same I have been using for some time. This makes finding references easy when I go back to consult something and it paid dividends in this Capstone research process. The idea behind the use of stickies to make notes and ultimately organize them took many hours and came from Resonate by Nancy Duarte (2010). As the idea for this paper began to take shape, I went back into the indices I had made inside each book and began to add a capital letter “C” in a circle to ideas I thought might be of use.

After setting up a simple Excel document that assigned a letter to each book, I began creating sticky notes for each note from each book. The notes contain a letter and number to indicate the source book and page, respectively. I began to correlate books to OD courses at this time, and as the Capstone evolved I added a checkbox in the first column to each source I used a sticky from. This helped ensure my bibliography would be correct. I used a number of different colored sticky notes as the process evolved to begin to form patterns or themes. At no time did I throw anything away unless it was a duplicate of a note I had already created. This proved to be most useful as my original Capstone idea revolved around how to onboard in a virtual company, and as such many of my notes dealt with virtual organizations. When my Capstone changed direction, I thought about simply trashing all of the notes taken with a virtual slant. The decision not to toss the virtual themed notes away proved prescient once the COVID-19 crisis hit and more and more individuals began transitioning to remote working arrangements. In the end, I wound up creating just shy of 500 sticky notes from the more than 7,700 pages I had read during my time in the program.
STEP 1: The first screenshot is the initial collection of nearly 500 individual thoughts or ideas collected from the references sourced in this document. Using foam boards purchased from Staples, I began to adhere notes as I wrote them. In addition, some of the referenced material did not wind up getting used and it remains on a foam board today (see the section on Other Books I’d Like to Write).

STEP 2: Once all of my notes had been placed on the foam boards, I referred to the Penn Venn diagram created at the onset of the Capstone process. See the appendix covering this process if interested. Writing each theme out on a piece of yellow or pink cardstock, I began to sort through the sticky notes one at a time, placing them under the heading that made the most sense. This process took some time (about 4 hours) and in the end, I was still left with 2+ boards of unsorted notes (bottom left of the second photo). The interim progress following this step appears below.
STEP 3: Now sorted by theme (with several sticky notes moved around in the consolidation process), I moved the notes by theme back on the foam boards once more. As I still had 2+ boards with unsorted notes on them, I put the unsorted notes on the wall to free up the foam boards in order to complete this step. I would use these boards as I wrote each reflection during the Capstone, bringing in supporting literature for each story/theme. I would use this wall of previously unused notes as the Capstone evolved, adding references where I needed them or where an argument/reference needed strengthening.

STEP 4: My Capstone now had a rough direction, but the details were still missing. I would spend time over the next 2 weeks or so thinking about the stories I would tell, wondering how each would be unique on its own but also fit the larger, cohesive whole.
I started with 11 story ideas and ultimately whittled them down to the 6 that are in this document. I still have the other 5 and may return to them sometime in the future. With story ideas now in hand, I started the writing process.

**STEP 5:** I was reading the McAdams and Nouwen books around this time and was struck by how each could be used in a unifying sense to bring much of the material in the Capstone together. Surrounded by stickies, I began to write the opening lines of this document. The rest is history...
APPENDIX B: THE PENN VENN TOOL

This document was created with the help of an online Venn diagram maker, located at http://bioinformatics.psb.ugent.be/webtools/Venn/. After identifying key themes of each individual course by reviewing class notes, papers I submitted and through time spent in reflection, I used this tool to determine themes that overlapped. The results of that analysis were then used to construct the PennVenn diagram below using Apple’s Keynote application.

![PennVenn Diagram]

Major themes of classes attended

Dan Castle, OD MPhil (2018-2020)
APPENDIX C: CASTLEBURY TALES STRUCTURAL AID

Dan Castle * Capstone Layout FINAL v4.0

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Sed dignissim ligula at tincidunt scelerisque. Mauris metus risus, efficitur ut tellus id.

- Capstone itself. Most of the document will consist of the main body. Acknowledgements and a brief intro to proceed the body; a section on applicability to main audiences (those considering OD and those in the middle of it) along with bibliography to follow.

- Capstone main body. The Capstone is told as a series of stories within a larger story that is a combination of dialogue between 2 characters (Grandfather and Grandson) and periods of reflection. Formatting of the main body will consist of black type, double spaced.

  Stories: Stories in *The Castlebury Tales* are told along a fictional journey. Themes of stories come from a combination of literature review and the PennVEER- my analysis of common themes from the coursework and experiential learning in my program. To separate the text of *The Castlebury Tales* stories from the main Capstone body, formatting will consist of black type, single spaced, indented and justified as shown. Dialogue in the main body will be black typeface with stories receiving an additional indent and an artful first letter in blue.

  Grandfather: Older man reading a book of stories to his grand son. Most of the Capstone is told through the lens of this person. Represents my reflections of key learnings during my Penn OD studies and their applicability in life and work. Following the conclusion of each of the stories being relayed to the grandson, this character reflects on the story and memories of Penn coursework. Literature reviews of key learnings will be added at times of reflection.

  Narrator of *The Castlebury Tales*: Middle aged man on a journey with friends, completing the last leg of his quest to attend a baseball game at all MLB stadiums. Setting is a drive from Philadelphia to Boston where friends are telling stories along the way. Prize for best story is bowl of clam chowder and a Sam Adams when they arrive in Boston. Represents my life experiences before and during Penn OD program.

  Grandson: Younger boy, age not disclosed but in the 9-11 age range.
  Represents the curious version of myself as well as the age of my children (currently 11 and 14 at time of writing).
APPENDIX D: MISCELLANEOUS

PLANS AFTER PENN

WORKS I STILL HAVE LEFT TO WRITE

- At some point, I will likely take the work that I began here in this Capstone and continue to extend it. Much like Chaucer’s work, there are more tales to be told...

COURSES I INTEND TO TAKE

- A course on Design Thinking at the Stanford d.School
- Learning to draw comics to better illustrate tales and depict life in general
- Learning to use Adobe Illustrator as a means to extending my creativity in both personal and professional life
- Attending a standup and improv class at Chicago’s Second City

CREATIVE WORKS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

Initial letters for The Castlebury Tales stories were downloaded on February 7, 2020 from https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-photo-fancy-initial-alphabet-image23316680