

Positive Autobiography

H. John Trowbridge

I was born in May of 1957 at the height of the baby boom. More babies were born that month in the United States than at any other time in its history. As the youngest child I was doted on by my brothers and sister. My memories of Ann Arbor, Michigan are vague but I felt loved. My family moved to Greeley CO in 1962 when I was 5 years old. My father had taken a job as a science professor at what is now the University of Northern Colorado. I remember staying at home while my brothers Tom, Dave, and sister Edie went to the elementary school which was a laboratory school connected with the university. My first year of school was at Maplewood Elementary, right across the street from the house we lived in. I was not too thrilled about attending school that first day. I escaped and ran off into the neighborhood. That first year in Colorado was also my first experience with snow skiing. The whole family would go on weekend ski trips to Hidden Valley near Estes Park or Lake Eldora or Loveland Basin. We had wooden skis, Cubco bindings and wore wool sweaters and mittens and whatever else was available to stay warm. Skiing was very enjoyable to me and became my favorite sport. I eventually became a very good skier or a very fast skier at least. My family did not own a T.V. when I was growing up. Not because we couldn't afford one but because my parents thought that there were much more educational things to do than spend our time together watching television. I remember family game nights shooting coroms, playing Scrabble, reading books, singing songs or listening to my Dad playing the accordion. My brothers were always working on science projects of one kind or another. They built a weather balloon powered by homemade candles that floated off high into the night sky. They also mounted a 3.5 h.p. Briggs & Stratton motor on the side of a heavy duty Schwinn bicycle. It had a centrifugal clutch and wooden pulley wheels which were made on our lathe. It ran like a bat out of hell and had a poor braking system. Also a camera that took long time exposure photographs of the night sky and a source of plasma with a temperature of over 10,000 ° F. My dad often brought home science related experiments and apparatus to teach us some hands-on science. He would occasionally bring home a T.V. monitor which was a big thrill for me to see to watch T.V. for a day or two. He brought home liquid nitrogen, yellowcake uranium, mercury, potassium permanganate and alum and chrome alum for growing our own beautiful crystals. I grew up in an environment that strongly encouraged lifelong learning. My family went on regular vacations all over the United States. By the time I was 18 years old, I had been in all 50 states. I got to see more places and experience new things more than most kids. We visited Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, New York City, Hawaii, etc. Also the Redwoods forests of California Crater Lake, Bryce Canyon and many other famous places. We often camped out in a tent while on those family trips. I was very lucky to have come from such a loving family. I found school to be fairly easy. I was always at the top of my class. In 1969 my father went on sabbatical and taught at New York University. We lived in a 30 story luxury apartment building at 110 Bleeker St. which is in the heart of Greenwich Village. It was an exciting year with the country in turmoil. Demonstrations against the Vietnam war and social upheaval. Also a sea change in the attitudes of the young people in the U.S. The hippie movement was getting underway. Woodstock was in upstate N.Y. My brother Tom was there. New York City is an exciting city with so much to see and do. I enjoyed riding the subway and exploring new parts of the city. I would go on weekend ski trips by myself, riding a bus with others to Hunter Mountain or Waterville Valley in New

Hampshire. My sister Edie worked for the phone company and stayed behind in NYC. She married and lived in the city for the next 25 years. My parents and I moved back to Greeley where I went back to attending the 8th grade at Lab School. I should also mention the summer my family spent in Guam. My father was teaching new Peace Corp Volunteers about science. He taught at the University of Guam. It was a tropical paradise with miles of white sand beaches and coral reefs full of tropical fish and giant clams and all kinds of exotic animal life. A house guest of the family, Bill Cunningham kept a pair of monitor lizards in cages behind the house. I remember them as being 2 and 3 feet long and bright green. We also had several translucent geckos living in the house. If they were grabbed by the tail, it would pull off and the lizard would scamper away. Living in Guam was a fantastic experience for a 10 year old boy. Another summer my Mom and Dad and I spent living on the Big Island of Hawaii. We stayed at a Peace Corp. training center in a tiny town named Ookala near Hilo. Hitchhiking all over the island was a good experience. Body surfing in the big waves of the Kona coast, snorkeling riding horses etc. There is a 17 mile drive that starts at the beach, continues through arid desert, begins climbing the hills into a temperate zone and then into a tropical rain forest where over 450in of rain falls each year, the wettest place on earth.

Driving further up the mountain brings you into a sub-alpine zone with cool breezes and a whole new variety of plant life. Finally, the road takes you into an alpine environment at over 13,000ft in elevation with snow covered peaks, suitable for skiing. Back in Colorado again school was still fairly easy for me. I received an award from the National Honor Society for having superior test scores.

I was on the wrestling team at 98lbs. Also I went on many school ski trips as well as those with family. One semester I took a class called skiing and nine kids would ride with the gym teacher to ski Estes Park for a full day of skiing each Tuesday. It has been one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life to breathe cold mountain air and cut fresh tracks in new powder snow. My family owned a condo at Keystone Resort which was a great destination for many winter ski trips as well as summer mini vacations. Hiking, climbing and exploring the beautiful Summit County was my favorite thing to do. In 1974 my father was the president of the National Science Teachers Association. In order for him to complete his duties we lived in Washington DC for one year. I attended Jeb Stuart High School in Falls Church VA for my junior year. It was a good experience. I would regularly go in and explore Washington DC. It was at the same time as the Watergate scandal involving President Nixon. So I got to see history in the making. Made a lot of friends in DC and Virginia. High school classes were a breeze. Also got to see all the famous landmarks and enjoy the vibrant energy of living in America's capitol city. Back to Greeley again for my senior year of high school. I had missed a lot of classes so I had to take 7 hr. a day for my last semester. Got my diploma in 1975 but missed the actual graduation ceremony because I was on my way to Alaska. I stayed with my Uncle Heinz and Aunt Dolores and their family. I had several jobs at a gas station, as a cook at a steak and king crab restaurant, carrying sheets of drywall for my uncles business, a short stint at a gold mine and as a welders helper on the Alaska Pipeline. Alaska was a beautiful place to live. I spent 18 months there getting my first real world work experience. Then back to Greeley once again. Went to work at Mountain Aggregates at their gravel crushing and wash plant. I also operated heavy equipment there for the first time. I liked having a regular pay check and the responsibility of having a job. (I got my work ethic from my father who taught college level science for over 50 years

without ever missing a day of work.) I worked there for around one year and learned a lot about the construction business and basic diesel mechanics. Also how to rebuild a wash plant and to maintain the machines. I then worked 6 months at Midexco excavating company as a phone line pipe installer. The experience I gained there was useful for my next job which was at Oliver Construction Company. I eventually worked there for the next 6 years. We had a contract to install 450 miles of water pipe from 2" PVC up to 16" transit pipe all over Morgan County and N.E. Colorado. It was a 50 mile commute to the job. I loved my work and put a lot of myself into doing a good job. I also met Iris Koch, my first serious girlfriend. Her father was my boss. I had a nice apartment in Evans and a 1972 Chevy Malibu. Life was good. Iris and I broke up after dating for about a year. I then met Debbie Purcell. She and I moved in together after dating for a few months. I went with her back to her hometown of Garden City, KS and got to meet her mother. Her mom passed away soon after that and her father had died a year earlier. Deb then inherited a large amount of money. She and I married in 1981. We bought 2 houses in Greeley. We bought 2 tickets for unlimited travel for 30 days on Eastern Airlines. She and I went to Florida Jamaica, St. Maarten, Bahamas and NYC. We had a great vacation and she got to meet my Uncle Oswald and grandmother in Longboat Key Florida. Also my sister Edie and her husband in New York. Our Son Adam was born on May 10, 1981 on Mother's Day. I was also born Mother's Day. We lived in our house on Carson Avenue in Evans. Both of us had jobs and plenty of money and were raising our first child together. I eventually left OCC and went to work at Western States Construction building a wastewater treatment plant. I learned concrete form carpentry and learned the pipe fitting trade. That job continued for 2 years in order to complete an award winning plant. My next job was a complete renovation of the historic Weld County Courthouse. There I learned finish carpentry skills as well as drywall finishing and the finer points of painting. At this point I need to stop and talk about how wonderful my mother is. She worked so hard raising 4 children, never complaining, cooking us 3 nutritious meals a day plus all the other chores involved with raising a family. She was very kind and smart and protective and loving. She also managed to earn a master's degree in home economics and become a substitute teacher. She taught for many years including teaching at an inner city NY & Washington DC public school which was a trying experience for her. She was always a solid supporter of my father and continues to do so to this day. They have been married now for 65 years. They are a loving couple and have both been an inspiration to me. They have always been there for me rarely complaining and never talking down to me. My father and I have been very close for my entire adult life. My brother Dave is a great guy and has a wonderful wife, Cynthia. He has been retired for more than ten years and lives on Whidbey Island, off of Seattle.

My son Adam was born in 1981. He is very bright and will be a success. He and I have a good relationship and stay in close contact through letters. We discuss a wide range of subjects. Both he and I are interested in world affairs, politics and science.

My daughter Sarah was born in 1988. She is a beautiful blond haired girl. She is very smart and graduated from college in 2010. After college she spent several months in Rome Italy working as a nanny. She then went on to Paris France to work for the next six months to complete her world tour she traveled to Vietnam and Cambodia before returning to Seattle.

My sister Edie lived for many years in New York City and the Hamptons. For the last nine years she has been a yoga instructor in Greeley. She has many students at recreation centers, colleges, and retirement homes and is in great shape physically. She is very kind and intelligent and full of energy. She has taken great care of Grandma and Grandpa by making sure they eat healthy and get plenty of exercise.

My brother Tom lives with his wife Kristina in Seattle. He has been a computer systems manager for the Federal Health Department for many years. He also runs a computer business. His wife owns a travel agency that specializes in cruises and African safaris. They both do a lot of traveling all over the world.

I stayed in the construction business my entire adult life. Working for Cornerstone Builders we built churches, schools, a hospital and a movie theatre. I learned all phases of carpentry and general construction. I also ran my own remodeling business in the Greeley area for several years. I worked on remodeling many houses and then moved on to light commercial construction. Working for Coggins Drilling I learned all about drilling caissons to support large buildings. Next was a job as a painter superintendent in Beaver Creek Colorado. I ran an 18 man crew of painters in charge of all fine finishes for several million dollar condominiums. I enjoyed the beautiful mountain setting and the great crew I had working for me. At that time I had met my second wife, Teri. She and I worked side by side and I taught her much of what I knew about construction. We moved back to Greeley after about a year and took on many painting and remodeling projects.

In 2001 I went to work as a commercial plumber on a 10 story hotel in Denver. I continued to learn and have worked for several large plumbing and mechanical companies since then.

I love to exercise by lifting weights, biking, jogging and walking long distances. I feel that it keeps me young and I definitely feel better when I had a good workout. I have been very serious about taking care of my body for the least five years. I feel healthy and plan to once again go back to the construction business and take on new challenges.

In 2004 and 2005 I attended Westwood College in Denver taking classes in Information Security Systems which involves providing virus protection for computers and networks. I learned many things in that time and have used my knowledge to repair and install many, many computers and computer networks. I really enjoy technology and can't wait to see what is next. I also love reading especially about quantum physics and cosmology.

Dear Mom & Dad, 11-9-2011

Here is an abbreviated version of my positive autobiography. I don't have access to a copy machine here. If possible I would like to have a few copies made and maybe send one to Adam and one to Sarah.

Thank you,

Love,

John