

REMINISCENCES III
Working, Sometimes Work, Sometimes Play

P & G I: After graduating from the Polytechnic Colleges of the Philippines (PCP) with a B.S. Chem. E., I started working at the Philippine Manufacturing Company (PMC) located in the Tondo district of Manila in 1960. PMC was the Philippine branch of Procter & Gamble, 100% owned by the Cincinnati behemoth. Some years after I left Manila, the name was officially changed to P & G Philippines. PMC was a local oil processor and soap manufacturer purchased by P&G in the 1930's and had undergone a phenomenal growth under P&G. Seven of us had graduated from PCP, a small school in Quezon City with an interesting pedigree and having only opened its doors in 1954. We'll come to that later. We were the first chemical engineering class of the new school, six guys and one lady named Helen. Today, four of us are in touch via email and rare visit. There were other engineering disciplines as well, like civil, electrical and mechanical and I am in touch with a few of them myself. There are three of us from the ChemE. class that are in the US and Canada, and there are several from the other disciplines that have immigrated as well, winding up in New Jersey and Virginia on the east, Chicago in the Midwest and Los Angeles in the west. I would venture to guess that no less than a third of the graduating class of 1960 left the country.



I started out as a 21 year old manager at P & G, then called PMC.

One of my contemporaries at PCP was none other than Joseph "Erap" Estrada, elected President of the Philippines in 1998 and deposed two years later. He now sits in jail, awaiting trial for corruption. He has never claimed PCP in his c.v. for good reason. He probably failed every subject. I am sure the records have been purged to remove the offensive information. Deciding that engineering wasn't for him, that the discipline required more than his IQ of 80 or so could handle, he went into acting and politics and the rest is history. What is the moral of the story? You can make a lot more money as an actor and politician than as an engineer. Back in the late 50's, he spent more time in the basketball court than he did in classrooms. Later on of course he switched to the boudoir.

As I was to find out later, P&G has an ingrained culture that has worked for them very successfully over the past century, whether it is Manila, Manchester, Madrid or Moscow. For example, only engineers are hired for management in manufacturing. You have humanities or other science degrees? Forget it. There were several PCP graduates interviewed by PMC but only two were hired. Besides me there was another fellow named Bobby Gonzales, who later worked for Mobil Oil in New York and Virginia. Bobby is also retired and lives near Washington, DC. At PMC, most engineers all started out as JSE's or Job Study Engineer. That's the old time and motion study people that emerged as industrial engineers. Now I didn't become a ChemE to conduct time and motion but I stuck with it and got rewarded by getting into production, which is what I wanted in the first place. Bobby had gone straight into engineering. Did I mention starting salary? It was 350 pesos per month or about \$90 at the prevailing exchange rates. That was a pretty decent salary, which PG had a reputation of providing. Today I heard that engineers now start at about \$1,000. But if you factor in inflation, it really hasn't changed much. That's slightly better than a 6% rate of growth, but inflation in the Philippines has averaged worse than that.

After my short stint as a JSE, the department I joined as supervisor – in the US the title of this job would be Team Manager - was synthetic detergents making (as contrasted to detergents packing which was another department.) The Team Manager of the Packing department was Rudy Cascon, a graduate of the US Merchant Marine Academy. This is another P&G practice, hiring from the services. All workers in the department were older after all I was only 21. Some

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were old enough to be my father. Now Tondo is a teeming worker's district with houses packed almost wall to wall, sometimes shacks, and has a reputation for being a very tough neighborhood. You didn't mess with guys from Tondo. A lot of Manila's hoodlums and gangs came from Tondo. There were about twenty-four or so guys, divided into teams that worked rotating shifts. I alternated shifts also and believe it or not got generous extra pay for it. The department worked 24/7 and when working Saturdays and Sundays I would be paid overtime. So the \$90 monthly turned into \$120 sometimes. I was ready to buy a car costing about a year and a half salary.

I loved the process, the very first of its kind in the Philippines. P&G of course invented the synthetic detergent and was converting the rest of the world to it. Our primary competitor Philippine Refining Company (Unilever) would build its own synthetic detergents plant some years later. The first feedstock was fatty alcohols made from our very own coconut oil. Then we transitioned from fatty alcohol to primarily alkyl benzene (not sure about this but it was definitely an alkyl aromatic hydrocarbon.) The feedstock came from the US and was reacted with oleum (sulfuric acid with sulfur trioxide) then neutralized and spray dried. We were producing Tide and Blue Cheer. I'm proud to say I wrote a few reports analyzing the chemistry and figuring out the heat transfer and making improvements. The process was a very exothermic reaction. Got some kudos from the plant manager, Pete Herazo. In 1961, the top PMC managers were all Americans – plant manager, superintendent, sales, marketing, advertising, etc. The superintendent was a fellow named George Wiltsee and the Product Development Director was Jim O'Halloran. He was a burly fellow who smoked these little cigars in his office. I was interviewed by all three Yanks, intimidating to a five foot eight inch 150 pound or so twenty-year old Filipino facing these three big guys. Today all the top managers are Filipinos and we even exported some of them to leadership positions in other parts of Asia. A budding manager during my time was Nick Mendiola, who was sent to manage other Asian plants. He just recently passed away. Nowadays the company routinely moves managers around the world and one Filipino engineers was recently (2000) transferred from Manila to Cincinnati. We truly are a global corporation.



The Detergents Process Dept. dinner. I'm sitting on the left. These were the technicians, the managers had their own party.

The workers were an interesting bunch of guys and I didn't have much of a problem except with a couple. One was a burly fellow named Ruben Armas who liked to walk shirtless sometimes to show his biceps. He challenged everything I did but eventually we came to a détente. This being the Philippines, there were cockfighting aficionados in our department. One operator regularly brought in his prized cock and tied him up in the lawn. I asked the Personnel Manager for help in persuading the fellow to leave his fighting chicken at home. We had to make a new rule. Living as an American citizen all these years, some of the antics back then look comical. Although you would think that we would've been more conservative and stricter with work rules and such compared to today, that wasn't the case. Filipinos often wear a wooden shoe called "bakya." It is nothing but a piece of wood with some heel carved then a plastic or leather strap in front for your toes. It is cheap and disposable. To be called part of the "bakya crowd" is a derogatory term. Anyway, half of them ran around in bakyas. Not exactly good foot protection and the wood got slippery. I've often wondered what happened to these fellows, they would be in the 70's or 80's by now if surviving. Unlike 95% of Filipino employers P&G provided these guys with a pension. They weren't bad to work with after my initial shock in being introduced to

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a department of tough older guys belonging to a militant labor union. The union like to test the young managers by filing grievances and sticking to the letter of the contract. Fortunately I was never subjected to a grievance which is an involved process.

To give you an idea of the tough neighborhood, an employee named Arcilla was stabbed to death within shouting distance of the plant. But the Tondo plant had no room for expansion. Part of it actually was reclaimed from Manila Bay. So P&G later bought a huge tract of land in the town of Cabusao, province of Laguna and invested \$100 million in new manufacturing facilities. That is a blockbuster investment for the Philippines and the then President Fidel Ramos (graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point) went there for the ribbon cutting. I am not sure of the status of the Tondo plant.

The workers had a tradition of going out for dinner and drinks during the Christmas season. PG gave a "Christmas gift" of a month's salary to all employees so the guys went to town. I'm not even sure if their wives (those that were married) knew about this gift. Only the workers or union guys went out, not the managers. The managers had their own parties, usually associated with milestones or achieving some objective. But the year I became supervisor, the guys invited me. They probably wanted me to get drunk and get ridiculous but I was the model of temperance. Besides, I couldn't drink like these guys. They were also probably softening me up so they could get away with b.s. at the workplace. There is a term called "pakikisama" in Tagalog loosely translated means buddy-buddy. When some shenanigans take place, pakikisama requires looking the other way. It means no ratting or squealing but I was an idealistic young manager, so no pakikisama.

Just like I found out in the United States later, P&G on your resume is an advantage. A lot of the P&G managers and skilled technicians such as chemists immigrated to the United States. That orderly exodus became a flood during the twenty year Marcos regime, 1966 - 1986. I even recall a "reunion" in the Chicago area in the 1980's when ex-P&G Filipinos got together. And now there is a US P&G Alumni on the web! See what I mean by P&G culture?

The Tondo plant was devastated as an aftermath of the liberation of Manila in 1945. During an AAll (American Association of Individual Investors) dinner in Cincinnati one evening, I met a P&G retiree who came to Manila as a young project engineer in 1946 to help rebuild the plant. His American children were all born in the Philippines. It's a small world, isn't it? Sorry but I should've written down his name.

What goes round comes round, and after a long hiatus:

P & G Redux: I seem to have a habit of returning to former employers. If they are willing to hire me back, I couldn't be that bad. Almost thirty years later I found myself working for P&G again, in Jackson Tennessee. That's where we make Pringles. That's the good news, getting an offer from P&G at my age (50) and unemployed. The bad news is that I'll have to start over. Remember my remark about ingrained culture? P&G only promotes from within. Didn't matter than I had almost three decades of working experience or that my compensation was pretty decent reflecting that experience. I told the Personnel Manager Terry Poteet that I once worked for P&G. Of course he had noticed it on my resume. Didn't make any difference, policy is policy. My starting salary would be the same as the guys coming out of school or out of Uncle Sam's service, 20-25 years or more my junior. They were less than half my age and had twice the testosterone (this doesn't apply to the women engineers in the class.) How am I going to keep up? I was able to negotiate something a little better in salary but the pay cut I

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took that year, 1990, was about 35%. Ouch. Or as they say in Tagalog, *napakasakit*. It took me years to catch up but fortunately, our major expenses were behind us and I had the unflinching support of Val. Now, if I had been lucky enough to start with PG in North America back in the 1960's instead of working for a succession of other companies, I would have lots of shares of P&G stock today but that's the breaks. Still, I have no regrets. It won't do any good anyway. There were at least a dozen young managers from the class of 90-91 in Jackson. They came from Vanderbilt, Tennessee Tech, University of Tennessee and Christian Brothers in Memphis. But now the only one I'm sure of that's still with the company is Mike Iten. The former Chiquita McBride might still be there but I'm not sure. Net, I outlasted those young whippersnappers! I survived the P&G crucible better than they did. Hah! P&G tries very hard to diversify its management, hiring women and minority engineers. But the turnover rate is extremely high. An African-American who joined later told me part of the reason was the social atmosphere in Jackson. It is terrible for singles, especially for minorities. Heck, I've heard that complaint about Cincinnati.

The work in Jackson was interesting and challenging enough but I wanted to return to R & D which was my experience at Quaker Oats. A series of events made this possible. I was minding my own business in Jackson when this six foot five inch man, easily 100 kilos, comes to me and said "kamusta kayo compadre." That means how are you compadre, a term used by men to address someone who is godfather to their children or vice versa but has come into vernacular use. I did a double take and asked him to repeat. This fellow turned out to be Steve Zimmerman and his wife was Filipina. He worked in Product Development in Cincinnati. To make the long story short we (Steve & Mila, Val & Mario) became and are still friends. PD needed some help, I wanted to be in R & D and Steve made it possible for me to meet the Associate Director, Marty Mishkin. And contrary to other companies, P & G encourages career growth and transfer are routine. So thanks to Marty and Steve, Val and I were off to Cincinnati in the fall of 1995.

The last five years I spent in Cincinnati with Global Snacks Product Development (PD) after transferring from Jackson were the best times. Maybe because I was approaching 60 and the testosterone levels have declined dramatically to make me more tolerant, less feisty and not likely to say this is crap, you shove it and therefore I'm off to another job. Which is what I had done, no less than five times. Take this job and shove it. I liked the Johnny Paycheck song. But



I always *Global Snacks Product Development, Food & Beverage Sector, taken in the summer of 2000. I'm sitting on the floor, sixth from the right. My boss Wendy Weil is seated on the extreme right with the big smile. Marty Mishkin is the last one standing in the back row.* strangely, had good

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rapport with former bosses, peers and direct reports. I'm still in touch a lot of them and see my 81 year-old former boss at Quaker regularly.

Our PD Associate Director in Cincinnati was Marty Mishkin, a brilliant man with a Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Finally, I had a boss who left



Wherever we travel, I always make it a point to check out our main product, Pringles. Hey, I know where my salary comes from. We're in Singapore.

me alone most of the time and rewarded me well. I finally caught up with the salary beating I received upon joining P&G. You'd also be surprised at what a little note saying great job would do to someone's motivation. I still keep the "attaboy" notes from Marty and also from our Director at the time, Dan Millisor. There were no "oh, shit" notes, if there was a problem, it was discussed privately.



Recent Wharton grad Nadine checks out Pringles in Indonesia.

And I was traveling to some exotic places for P&G. Well, maybe not that exotic but better than the places I went to at Quaker Oats, which were places like Danville IL, St. Joseph MO, Cedar Rapids IA and Shiremanstown PA. I remember going to St. Joe for months on end and fortunately my system couldn't tolerate much liquor, which gave me an excuse to say I've had enough. Because the Quakers I traveled with, Leo Carroll and Chuck Gossen, liked to close the Ramada Inn bar almost nightly. I only traveled twice overseas for Quaker, to Valencia, Venezuela and Bad Salzflun, Germany. But with P&G, I visited a company in Italy no less than eight times. Pavan was in a town only an hour by train west from Venice. So I got to see Venice numerous times and take Val twice. We made side trips to Rome, Firenze (Florence to y'all,) and Verona. Verona is the home of Shakespeare's tragic lovers Romeo e Julietta and Julietta's home is a tourist attraction. Of course there are many who say that the couple never existed and the story is fiction. So what? There is a bronze statue of Julietta with her breasts exposed and legend has it that if you rub the breast, you will be lucky in love. So I did rub despite the protestations of Val saying aren't you embarrassed in front of all these people? Frankly no, I'm an American tourist and I can be a boor. That rubbing made one of Julietta's breasts very shiny. It was from all these people rubbing through the years, not just me.

On one weekend trip to Rome with a couple of engineering guys, Michael Hayden and Nigel Bard, we made the mistake of driving instead of taking the train. In Rome, I took over some of the driving with near disastrous results. I hadn't driven stick shift in a long time and nearly burned the clutch. You should have heard it grinding when I tried to go uphill. You could smell the lining or fluid or whatever it was. Nigel was yukking it up in the back seat. Michael was trying to coach me on coordinating the hand brake and clutch. Engage the emergency brakes, disengage slowly as you ease up on the clutch. Michael was a patient instructor but I floored the gas and jerked the clutch. I got our selves lost in Rome too. But we did ask for directions from some carabinieri and somehow found ourselves back heading north to Venice on the Autostrada.

And the restaurants! The Italians take their food and wine seriously. Celeste Zanotto, our Pavan host, made sure we were treated right. I kept a list of the places whose names still make my mouth water. Belvedere (pronounce every syllable please,) Villa Contarini, Villa Palma, Castelo Superiore de Marostica (a real castle high above the valley,) Tamburello,

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Galleone d'Oro, Alla Mura, Do Mori, Teatro, Saraceno, Belie. Enough or I'll be buying a ticket to return. The Italians also have a wine called vino novello, literally new wine. The wine hasn't completed the fermentation process so the alcohol is a little lower and the flavor sweeter. The wine is sold shortly after harvesting and cannot be sold after Christmas. It is the smoothest wine you could drink and it is only 2-3 months old. Then there was the after dinner libation. Grappa and limonciolo. Grappa comes from the creative use of by-products. After wine is decanted off the skin, seeds, etc. for aging, what to do with the mash? Why distill it of course to make grappa. Why feed it to the animals? Strong stuff. Oh, what was the project we were working on? Some fried snack, I think. It has faded into inglorious memory. I did get to co-author two patents.



A great team! The Cincinnati based people I worked with most in the years prior to retirement. From left are John Baer, Kate Thornton, Wayne Krueger, Amy Dawson and my boss Wendy Weil.

A few months before my retirement, I asked my Section Head and immediate supervisor, Wendy Weil, that instead of the usual lunch and "roast," that I would prefer donations to the Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children or to the Ronald McDonald House. Skip the other usual stuff. A word about Wendy – she is probably 110 pounds soaking wet and strongly principled. She never ducks issues, not one of those let's leave it alone it will go away. I've had 22 managers (by actual count) in my working life, all of them men. That is a turnover averaging about twenty-one months per manager. It is them, not me. Wendy is the only woman manager I've reported to and the only one who had given me a hug, several times in fact. If any of those other 22 guys tried giving me a hug, there would've been trouble. Get away from me, you..... Wish I had more women managers—as long as they are like Wendy.

Imagine my surprise when not only did I receive a significant check to donate to the Shriners Hospital, I was given lunch after lunch as well. An even bigger surprise was the size of the check. I had estimated maybe \$200, a couple of bucks here and there, but they had raised \$700! And I promised to match it dollar for dollar. But Val and I were happy to do so and a total of \$1,500 was given to the Cincinnati Shriners Burnt Children Hospital. By the way, if any one ever feels sorry for themselves, visit a Shriners Hospital and look at the kids. Some are horribly burned and scarred, but Snacks PD helped to make their world a bit better. And mine too.

Thanks guys!

Peripatetic Engineer:

A year and a half after coming to Pittsburgh for graduate studies, I started working for the Rockwell Manufacturing Company. It was a medium sized company where I stayed for only two years. My next employers in chronological order after Rockwell were Lubrizol Corp., Quaker Oats Co., Griffith Laboratories, back to Quaker Oats, followed by Martha White Co., a two-month stint with Sverdrup Co. (shouldn't even count) and finally Procter & Gamble. If you've been counting, I changed jobs no less than six times. Don't do it. Here is the job-hopping experience I accumulated.

Rockwell Manufacturing Co.: Rockwell was a necessity more than a real career choice. I was finishing up at Carnegie Tech and was terribly low on funds. Non-existent funds would be a better word. The letters to my parents were punctuated with the same message. Please send money. Not large amounts, but a hundred here, a hundred there. We had a unique way of

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R & D crew at Rockwell in Pittsburgh, PA in 1964. It was my first job in the United States. Six hundred twenty dollars a month.

transferring funds. Toto's mother-in-law Mrs. Gregoria Cristobal had a US bank account and her husband had been in the Philippine foreign service. My parents gave the pesos to the in-laws, who in turn sent me a dollar check. I better get a job, and soon. The Rockwell job turned up, it was in Pittsburgh and I could take a streetcar. Rockwell made meters of all kinds, gas, oil, parking, etc. plus large industrial valves. What's a chemical engineer doing here? Well, checking out their paints and lubrication. It was a job. Not exactly the interesting P&G chemical process but the salary paid the rent, tuition and car payments. The salary? Six hundred and twenty dollars per month. Average starting salary for a chemical engineer in 1963. A quantum leap from P&G Manila but the expenses were much higher too. I didn't pay any rent living at home. I was now in the real world. But I finally ended about six months on the dole.

In 1966, Carol and I were already married and in January Nadine was born in Shadyside Hospital. Being from Akron, Carol wanted to move back to Ohio. I didn't relish the idea of being in the same town as my in-laws. That is really strange considering that it is customary for Filipino couples to live with one of the parents for years after marriage. But I'm different. Rockwell was OK but not the type of job I wanted to do long term so with the help of a recruiter, I went looking. I still have contact with Bill Brownlee, one of the fellows I worked with at Rockwell.

Lubrizol was a chemical company in Painesville, Ohio an hour north of Akron. Mario Jr. was born in Painesville. Carol was happy, I was happy, for a time anyway. We visited Akron frequently. Lubrizol made these awful concoctions that make your engine run better. Without the additives to your automatic transmission fluid, crankcase oil, gear grease and fuel, your engine would fall apart in half the time. The reactions are a veritable witches brew. Interesting from a chemical engineering point of view but before entering our house, I had to change clothes because of the residual chemical smell. The gaseous byproducts of the reactions stank. Ever passed by a petroleum refinery or a pulp and paper plant? That's the smell. The by-products were mercaptans and in case you've forgotten your chemistry, mercaptans are sulfur compounds that make stuff stink, like rotten eggs and skunk juice. All it takes is a few parts per million.

We bought our first house in Painesville, a modest ranch but with an acre of land with some nice trees. It cost \$23,000 and the only reason I mention that is because thirty years later, the car I bought for Val had a MSRP of over \$23,000. I had been resisting buying any car that cost more than my first house but you know how inflation is. Mario Vincent was born in Painesville and that is where I applied for citizenship although I didn't take the oath until after transferring to Crystal Lake, IL.

Nothing is better for thee than me said the Quaker Man:

That was the line of one Quaker commercial. Quaker is no more, absorbed by Pepsi-Cola but it was a company with a lot of history that I joined in early 1971. I had left Lubrizol's chemical plant in Painesville, Ohio. Best decision I ever made, going to the food industry, I'm convinced that not having to breathe those chemical fumes at Lubrizol will lengthen my life expectancy. The Quaker R & D organization I joined in 1971 was centralized meaning departments were not broken up into different product lines. Oscar Gilbert was boss of the processing department

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and we supported all the research projects from corn processing (wet and dry) to pizza to confectionery, syrup, oatmeal, ready to eat (RTE) cereal, snack bars and pet foods. Fortunately I never got into pet foods. Why not? OK, how would you like to work with animal byproducts like heart, lungs, tripe etc. In the early days, Quaker even slaughtered horses at a plant in Rockford IL and it was a rite of passage to take new employees to the “kill floor” just before lunch. That’s for the pooches. And for the kitties, there is fish. They had a plant in Pascagoula MS which bought fish for grinding. I’ll refrain from telling gross stories about odors and stuff. But I got a tremendous amount of across the board experience in all manner of food processing. This would no longer be possible today as companies assign groups of people to specific product lines. We’ve all become specialists. But the variety of projects at Quaker in the 1970’s made it fun.

There was tremendous opportunity for learning and making technical contributions. Here are a few issues to illustrate; how do you determine the freezing point and heat of fusion of heterogeneous material like pizza, which may have twenty ingredients and what is the freezing rate? How do you increase the heat transfer coefficient and efficiency of a drum dryer? How do you induce a humectant like glycerol to migrate into dried fruit (like raisins) without piercing the skin and violating the Kellogg patent? How do you coat cereal with thick syrup without getting it broken up? Determine the efficacy of flow through vs. in and out enrobers. How do you instantize grain products? Pinpoint control of enzyme breakdown of starches. And the clincher, how do you scale up a process, especially extruders. That is a subject that still hasn’t been mastered. Enough.

There was no lack of variety among the projects. I’m proud that products that I had a small hand in are still in the market place. Quaker Oh’s RTE cereal, Oat Squares RTE cereal, Life, Cap’n Crunch, Chewy Granola Bar, Dipps (chocolate covered chewy bars,) all manner of mixes (pie crust, pancake for McDonald,) Aunt Jemima & Celeste products. (Some of the latter products were sold and no longer carry the Quaker name.) There is a special mixer that is used to mix syrup with granola to make the base for chewy bars and I found this equipment in non-food use and we adapted it for food. I’m especially proud of that too. What about the projects that didn’t make it? That list is just as long if not longer. There was a passion one time for meat extenders or meat analogs. Between you and me, I’ll take the cholesterol and saturated fat loaded hamburger and you can have the flavored soy. And I don’t want to sit next to you afterwards. The analogs? They wound up being more expensive than the real thing and didn’t taste as good. And still made you flatulent.

There is one achievement I am particularly proud of, getting a mixer to blend in the viscous (thick) syrup and the grain base for chewy granola bars. One of the major issues was in order to get the syrup mixed in, the agitation needed caused the grain to be almost pulverized. Looking around, I found a mixer advertised that I thought would do the job. Why invent it when you can purchase what you need? Get this now, the mixer was used to mix the paste that goes into your batteries. There was little force involved and the mixing was akin to a static mixer. Let me explain the principle this way. Take two handfuls of grain. Pour them into a pile. Divide it up so that each half has a little of the other. Keep repeating. Trust me, it works and the number of times it is blended goes by the power of 2 raised to just how many blades are installed—it could be 10. Do the math and the number exceeds 1,000. Sorry to be so technical but this was a key in getting the product manufactured.

There was a problem. The manufacturer of the mixer didn’t know how to machine stainless steel. Trust me, it takes a special expertise and equipment to work with stainless steel. So the

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Quaker shop had to teach them but the results still were not satisfactory. So my manager at the time, Bill Hall, decided to make one in our shop. There was the simple matter of a patent so we were in violation since we had no permission and didn't bother to ask. (This would not be done by a manager today.) Everything proceeded smoothly but you know Murphy's law. Through one of the manufacturing guys, the equipment people found out we had made our own machine in violation of their patent. So there were phone calls and a lawsuit. But it was settled amicably. The other company's technical manager came in and I showed him around to talk to the Quaker machine shop people to coach them on the processing of stainless. We agreed to cease and desist. Quaker then bought a number of mixers and Chewy Granola Bar became one of their most successful products. And I had a small hand in it. I told you that mixer would work! I mentioned Bill Hall initially. Bill was a former equipment salesman and hailed from Georgia. He was irreverent and not intimidated by higher management, which of course got him in trouble. So in a turn of events, when I got into management, Bill was made to report to me. That seems cruel and unusual punishment. But we were able to communicate effectively and when it came for him to retire (he was about 20 years older than me) I organized a going away dinner although upper management didn't want one. I did it anyway, with Bill bringing his wife and daughter Harriet. We stayed friends until he passed away at 80 a few years ago. Incidentally Harriet is an actress and as appeared in TV specials and commercials.

I was in the middle of a cultural transition, not just Quaker's but the United States. In 1971, I was the only non-white in Oscars' group. Slowly but surely, there were more Chinese and Indian engineers. There never were any African Americans or Hispanics since their population in engineering schools was abysmal. There wasn't any to recruit. I hope it is better today but there were hardly any in engineering schools then. But there were a lot of immigrant Asians with M.S.'s and Ph.D.'s. The native-born Americans were staying away from engineering or if they finished, very few went on to graduate school. Today Asians are entrenched in technical fields at Quaker and P&G. In both companies, we are over represented in the technical community in proportion to our population. At one time there were so many Chinese heritage engineers and Ph.D.'s at Quaker that they were referred to as the Chinese Mafia. This terminology wouldn't be allowed today. In some technical departments at P & G, Asians are anywhere from 15 to 20 per cent.

After Oscar, I was reporting to a guy named Tom Milling at Quaker. Tom was another one of those highly intelligent alpha types and I initially did well with him. I liked what I was doing and had the biggest back to back or year to year salary increases under Tom, double digit. Hear that, Tom? That had never happened before anywhere, or since. But I could see all around me that competence was only a small factor in advancement. Which wasn't Tom's fault. So Johnny Paycheck's record got played again. In retrospect, I should've just enjoyed my work, my new family of Val and her four kids, the Masons & Shriners whom I had recently joined and not worry about the office politics. Calmed down, don't be so greedy, hubris gets you in trouble. Besides, I was making friends in and out of work. Val worked different jobs to help out and we were doing fine. She baby sat at home and sold Avon. Later on she worked as a church secretary. Tom placed me under one of the few native born Ph.D.'s, Jim de Acetis. How this guy ever got through engineering school I'll never know. Nice guy with a work ethic but could never remember or calculate anything. Simple things like heat transfer is driven by Q equals U times Area times log mean T . Didn't you know that, Dr.? Sorry, Jim.

Griffith Laboratories:

Griffith was a small family owned business and the 80 something patriarch and founder Mr.

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Carroll Griffith still came to the office almost daily. I was hired by Ron Olson, who promptly quit shortly afterward to work for Quaker Oats as manager of their Danville plant. Ron and I later referred to it as a trade between Griffith and Quaker. As you'll see later, this was only the first of Griffith & Quaker exchanges. Those days, executive recruiters or "headhunters" would call everyone they could think of and encourage job switching. Headhunters are paid by the body count and unless there was turnover, they didn't earn their commission. But there was a shortage of engineers so they exploited it, constantly stroking my ego. My new boss at Griffith was Dennis Hilgenberg, short and slender of build but very mild mannered. I really liked working for Dennis and wouldn't have minded working for him the rest of my career. He kept his demands reasonable, keeping intrusions to a minimum and gave me nice raises. But Griffith was located in Alsip, which was exactly 55 miles from Crystal Lake. That was a long, long drive. I got my office switched to the Chicago plant at 39th St. and Ashland and that was a shorter drive but not much. Dennis gave me flexible hours and I started before 7:00 am to beat the traffic. Still it was no picnic. Then the winter of '79 came roaring in. During one blizzard, we got about 24 inches of snow and it never melted till spring. I never made it home that evening. My cousin Corazon and her family lived in Chicago and I asked them to put me up for the night, which turned into several nights. That kind of commute couldn't be possible today with more cars but same highways.

Griffith's businesses were protein concentrate, textured vegetable protein or TVP, spice mixes, batters and dry mixes. They supplied fast food companies ranging from Long John Silver to McDonald. I made forays to their plant in Remington IN which made the TVP. The plant manager was Ron Brooking, who later left and joined a company named Liqui-Dri. Well, during those expansion years when buying companies and creating conglomerates was in vogue, Quaker Oats bought Liqui-Dri. So Ron and I both worked for the same company again and have remained friends. In his late 60's by now, Ron continues to work as a consultant and occasionally suggest that I join him.

One of Griffith's main products is hydrolyzed vegetable protein, a fancy way of saying soy sauce. Soy meal or some other high protein material grain is digested with strong acid in a reactor and then neutralized. We'll skip the chemistry but suffice it to say that the final product is used as a flavor enhancer. The process has one disadvantage in that it produces a nasty by-product that looks like black soup. It is high in organic material and stinks. Disposition is a major issue. One disposal method was to inject the soup into farmland and the farmer that acceded to the arrangement was in McHenry County, 15 miles or so to the north of where we lived. A lot of sewage sludge is disposed of in the same manner. So I visited the farm. This guy was an operator, taking organic material from Griffith along with other farm wastes (read manure) and getting his farm fertilized for free. He never had to use chemical fertilizer. Later on I learned that he had to stop due to environmental complaints. How would you like to be his neighbor?

Quaker Redux:

While working for Griffith, ran into old boss Oscar Gilbert in Crystal Lake and we discussed my returning, he needed another manager for his ever-growing department. So back to Quaker I went. But it didn't take long after I returned when those enumerable reorganizations took place. I no longer reported to Oscar, my long time mentor. This time it was Scott Gantwerker. If I had to name the three or four most intelligent men I've ever met, Scott would be one of them. He had an MS in Chem. E. and an MBA from the University of Chicago, impressive credentials. He was young, ambitious and possessed a great sense of humor. But Quaker was promoting a bunch of very young managers, under 30, destined for great positions. They were on the "fast

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In 1983 Quaker sent me to a privately run two and a half week senior management seminar in Sarasota, FL. It was a good sign. I'm on the right with the corduroy jacket and dark glasses.

track.” I was a dozen years older and didn’t like it. But it was really nothing new. Happens all the time. In all companies. My job was in management this time and I hardly spent any time on the technical phase. I had as many as seven engineers reporting to me and controlled a significant budget. So what the heck was I complaining about? I did have interesting personnel challenges. This time I won’t name the names but a lady engineer complained about gender discrimination and harassment by another engineer. They were both in my group. It was like having both barrels fired at you. I had to make an official statement to company lawyers, like a deposition. The lady engineer gave me a difficult time. She would come into my office and berate me about being a male chauvinist pig, complain about how others were promoted before her. Little did she realize that she was the highest paid engineer at her level in the process department.

I asked for help from Personnel but I was told basically to sit there and take it, so I did. I was ready to dish out what I was receiving. I don’t have to listen to this crap on an almost daily basis. She eventually quit but I was the only one she would have lunch with before departure. We had a very nice long discussion, loosened by margaritas. She even smiled at me as we shook hands on her way out the door. I hope she is doing fine. But my wanderlust or whatever it is got going again. Johnny Paycheck time again.

By far the most interesting fellow that ever reported to me was Mitchell Lipski. He was an original, a sharp guy with a chemical engineering degree from Columbia University. His personal life reminded me of the West Side Story. Mitch is Jewish and he married Diana, a Puerto Rican girl, both being natives of New York City. They had a couple of boys. But the story starts to unravel at this point. Mitch was a bodybuilder and he told me that certain drugs, like steroids, were rampant in bodybuilding gyms. But they do have strange side effects. I went to see Mitch compete one time, but I haven’t been to a bodybuilding contest since. Maybe I’ll go to a woman’s contest, but not men’s. The contest was weird, the men shaved all their body hair and spent hours under a sun lamp, finally slathering their bodies with baby oil. Mitch said the darker skin and oil helps highlight the muscular definition. I’m dark but how come I don’t have any definition? He never did say if he was taking steroids or not and I never pressed him. Some of the drugs consist of testosterone and Mitch told me they cause aggressiveness. All our projects require travel and Mitch regularly went to one of our cereal plants in Harrisburg. Well, either the natural or artificial steroids caused him to pursue nocturnal activities. Of course Diana found out. She would call me at work and wail about her life. I listened, just like I did to the lady engineer above.

One weekend, I got a call from Mitch. I need to see you, he said. OK, I’ll be seeing you on Monday. Mario, I need to see you now! OK, I’ll drive over to your house. Mitch was going to be transferred from R & D to engineering, which had offices at the Merchandise Mart in downtown Chicago. But unbeknownst to me or anyone else at Quaker, he had been interviewing other companies during the time he was considered for a transfer. It seems that General Foods had just offered him a job with a substantial salary increase. He actually asked me for advice. We compared responsibilities and salary and I said, what are you waiting for. So on the day he was supposed to start at engineering, he actually turned in his resignation to the engineering

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manager. The manager was furious and got on the phone immediately. Mario, did you know anything about this? Yes, I found out last week. I think that was the last time they tried to transfer somebody from R & D to engineering. It took a while for the engineering manager to talk to me.

Mitch found his way to GF's New York office, and he & Diana purchased a really nice house in Dutchess County. I visited them one time when a business trip took me to the area. But they were eventually divorced. Mitch left GF for Estee Lauder and we eventually lost track.

Martha White Foods:

This was going to be the mother of all of my jobs. Got a nice increase from my previous pay at Quaker and was included in the management "bonus pool." Hear about those obscene bonuses to executives? I was finally going to partake and drink at their well. I was 48, so this is it, getting what I really want. The year was 1988 and I could be making six figures in the not too distant future. It was a small company of less than five hundred employees. To get the job I had to be interviewed by the president, Bobby Dale. I would report to a Director, George Mast, who then reported to Mr. Dale. No big pyramid of an organization. George, by the way, is an ex-Procter engineer. He's a sharp guy with a master's degree from the California Institute of Technology at Pasadena. In his office he had a couple of those bronze and wood patent awards that P & G hands out and I have a couple myself. If you are an engineer who hasn't heard of Cal Tech and their reputation, you've been under a rock. The Jet Propulsion Lab of the U.S. space program is based there and the students regularly pull the most creative and ingenious practical jokes. They once got a Volkswagen beetle to the top of the MIT's dome in Cambridge, MA. Back to Martha—I was committed to Martha White no matter what. George got out of the food industry a few years later and is involved in Christian missionary work near Brownsville, Texas.

I choose to have my office in Jackson instead of Nashville. Val and I looked at both towns and we both preferred Jackson. A smaller town with better property bargains and I knew a few people who still worked at the Quaker Oats frozen food plant. I worked on projects that required me to spend time in Jackson so I was a little familiar with the place. We built a really nice three-bedroom brick house for \$99,000. That figure is not a misprint. I said bargains didn't I?

Jackson was the location of MWF's main manufacturing plant and the manager was a gentleman named Paul Hampton and I don't use gentleman loosely. To make the long story short we became good friends and even after I left and he retired, we saw each other regularly. A once a month breakfast or lunch club for two. Whenever Val and I visit Tennessee to see our daughter's family, I make it a point to have that club meeting with Paul. He is the most disciplined man I know. Our monthly brunch tradition was uninterrupted from 1990 to 1995 and we manager 2 or 3 times a year after that.



Paul Hampton, Martha White's Jackson Plant Manager. We remain friends and get together whenever we are in TN.

There was another perk involved with the job. MWF had a private plane, a two engine Super King Air with turbo prop. (That means it has a jet engine that turns the propellers.) One of these days I'll remember his full name but the captain was named Tom. On trips going east, I would drive to Nashville and we'd go from there. On trips going west, they would stop in Jackson to pick me up. No getting boarding passes, no waiting. The plane left when we were ready. Unlimited snacks and

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refreshments were available in the plane. Just make sure you go potty before going on board. The sanitary facility is limited. Tom would often ask the co-pilot to make room for me up front. It is a terrific view up there. I told Tom I didn't believe pilots really looked at all those dials, gauges and switches. He said they did. If we went to a town like Chester, Illinois for a couple of days, Tom and his co-pilot would wait for us and they would find some amusement like golf. Great job, being a corporate pilot. But I found out later that pilots of small planes get rotten pay, even the ones working for the majors. You have to fly the biggies at major airlines to make the big bucks. When there was a strike at Comair, the commuter division of Delta, it was revealed that a starting pilot started out at something like \$20,000 annually. Outrageous, you can make more money working as a temporary at P & G. And you don't have to be responsible for a \$20 million plane and fifty passengers.

The majority owner or controlling interest of Martha White belonged to Meshulam Riklis, a fabled financial operator in his own right. He was better known for being married to a young actress named Pia Zadora, about a third of his age, than as a feared takeover kingpin, the master of leveraged buyout (LBO.) He was the American Horatio Alger story, a Jewish refugee arriving with nothing. Riklis was credited with the quotation "You name the price, I'll name the terms." He had gotten MWF from the old Beatrice conglomerate and we were led to believe that he was going to grow the company. That meant investing capital, R & D, etc. etc., having a long-term perspective. They were flat out lying. Within a year and a half, Riklis had sold MWF to a group led by a South African native named Ian Wilson. He was also an LBO artist, but not in the same league as Riklis or KKR (Kravis, Kohlberg and Roberts.) He spouted the same set of lies.

Very soon after, my job and the job of several others at MWF were gone. Wilson and his partners went on to buy other food companies, including the Duncan Hines mixes business of Procter & Gamble. But all these times, Wilson and his cohorts were doing a lot of financial legerdemain. They successfully bought these companies by paying high prices and borrowing. Then they inflated the profits. They had gone public and wanted to boost the stock price so they could unload. They were a few years ahead of the Enron/Andersen and World Com people. Eventually, Wilson and his cabal were caught and pleaded guilty. I hope they are rotting in a federal prison. Unfortunately, unwitting investors who bought shares were left holding the bag in his company and numerous employees lost their jobs.

So my job of all jobs with MWF lasted from Oct. 1988 to Jan. 1990. But 1990 was the best year I've ever had from a financial viewpoint. Here's what happened. I received a significant severance pay from MWF. Then my boss George Mast asked me to continue working as a consultant to finish the projects we had. I asked George, wouldn't you be concerned about me working there since I could be keeping a grudge. He said he wasn't, he must've figured out my mercenary streak. And I also got the management "bonus" although the fiscal year hadn't ended. That was part of the severance. So after you add it all up, 1990 was a great year.

But the "consulting" job ended and George himself left the company. And so after MWF I was unemployed but P&G came along and I wound up finishing my thirty-nine year career with Procter and Gamble, the company I had started with at the other side of the globe. If you had told me this was what the future entailed, I would've said you are smoking something illegal.

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My retirement "card" from Global Snacks. Befitting the diversity of our department, several of the greetings were written in languages such as Mandarin, French and Spanish..



Turning the donation from Snacks (matched by Val and me) to Ms. Louise Hoelker of the Shriners Burns Hospital in Cincinnati. The card and the "check" were the handiwork of Susan Weitzel, Marty Mishkin's secretary. Susan is one cracker-jack of a woman. Thanks Susan!