

Chapel Talk
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This past spring, I gave into the temptation of submitting a DNA sample to one of those genealogy companies. Now, going into this I had a pretty good idea that I knew 25% of where my heritage would fall: Italian. It could've been even more was my thought. My mother's maiden name is Pellicciotti and I even had the Ellis Island documents that showed when that side of the family came stateside. Upon getting my results, I quickly called my mother to ask, "is there something you need to tell me"? It turns out that I am only 3% Italian and that I'm more Scottish than anything else. Not only did this finding blow away what I considered to be a firm foundation of who I was, but it opened up so many questions about who I am and where I came from. I've now found myself on a new journey of discovery with many questions to answer.

Life affords us uncertainty, questions and opportunity. We may think we have a script, a plan or an ideal of what is going to happen next. I have found in my personal experience, my life story, that ultimately you cannot predict an outcome with 100% certainty.

Growing up in upstate New York, I had the privilege of going to the second largest high school in the state at that time. It may have well of been a community college in size and class offerings. I entered my senior year with my path set, everything figured out: I was going to go to college for civil engineering. I had taken all the engineering courses available to me and found myself taking an architectural course to fill in my hours in my final year. It took no time at all for me to feel that I found the perfect pairing between art and mathematics in Architecture. THIS was it. I would go to college for Architecture, graduate, design homes for a living, and live in one I designed. I even designed my dream home as a class project. My script was set, I just had to do my part to make it happen.

In reflecting back on how I got here from there, I would never have thought such a journey was before me. My four years of architectural education gave way to me finishing up in accounting with a close minor in philosophy that played to my love of reading old books of thought. I supported myself through school by working in hotels and restaurants and being promoted to management jobs while attending school full-time. Upon finishing up college, I felt I had a knack for the Hospitality business and continued my growth in the profession. I found myself weaving and navigating my management experience in the everchanging hospitality landscape through 9/11 and a number of other economic challenges. In between that, I had the

good fortune of meeting my wife through a hotel that I managed in Ireland. She, like me, had a different script that she had in hand to become a chemical engineer before finding hospitality to be her calling. In another twist of script, she now works in education where her hospitality mindset has been an asset in fighting for Charter Schools. Through the myriad of experiences, challenges and adaptation, I found myself with the opportunity to join St. Andrew's School over 13 years ago to head up the dining and catering operations here. I truly feel I have been blessed with this opportunity that I would have never expected to be a part of when Architecture was my calling many years ago.

During the pandemic, and as family members reached their golden years, I found myself becoming more of a genealogical sleuth. Even before my DNA results, I found myself asking questions of family members and investigating "leads". I plugged everything into an online genealogy family tree and let the search engine produce more leads, more questions. Even with this wonder of information at my fingertips, my best source was my grandmother. She was a wealth of information that you would not find through a website or a Google search. Intrigue around a sister that was never known and sorting out the lineage of names were a part of the investigation. I was most interested in my grandfather. He was my father figure, my basketball coach, my running enabler and bowling sage. In my interviewing process I found that his script in life was one of choices and unpredictability. I knew my grandfather as the principal of an elementary school. Upon my investigating, it turned out he was the longest serving principal and holds that record to this day. He was loved by faculty and students alike and I still receive comments on social media directed to me that affirm this. One of the most striking stories of choice, of a script not followed, is one I found out about my grandfather. He was a 3-sport varsity athlete coming out of high school. He played baseball at an upstate New York college while completing his studies in education. He played so well that he was offered an opportunity to play professional baseball with the Boston Red Sox. My grandfather ended up pursuing his love of education and serving others by being the longest serving principal for 17 years. He impacted many with his change of script.

Much like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, life's script, your path, may not be yours at first. You may feel you are prepared for life's challenges. You adapt and persevere. But knowing that there is change, that you may not control the path, will only arm you with the grit to succeed.

Some in the community know that I dabble in ultramarathons: 50 milers, 50k's. I set the goal when I sign up. I prepare with working out and coming up with a nutrition and fueling plan along the way. Race day happens with excitement, a nervous energy and always with a question of whether I prepared the right way

or not. You go through a roller coaster of emotions and questioning. Mile 36 of a 50-miler tends to be the worst point for me. Not only do I question if I'll finish, but I swear I'll never do it again. I will myself to finish. When I finish, the only other constant besides the pain I feel is the "will" that I will never subject myself to it again. Two days after a race, like clockwork, I find myself scouring the internet for the next one to goal towards.

Life has a way to challenge and change all your plans regardless of your preparation or sight on a path. Have faith, stand resolute about the path set before you, much like Jesus had, despite not knowing what might happen. God's way is not always going to be what you think is your way. Life's way may not ultimately follow the script you first had.