

FROM HUNGER

I got my first job when I was nine years old. One of my classmates was a caddy at a local country club near Elsmere, Kentucky. One day he asked me if I wanted to be a caddy too, and I said, "Sure." My parents thought it was a good idea since it would teach me the value of a dollar. I thought it was a great idea since I would get to keep the dollars.

This was the beginning of my love affair with money. As a result of working at the country club, I learned just how important money really was. It enabled people to have the nicer things in life, most of which I hadn't even known existed. My father was only making \$4,000 or \$5,000 a year as a surveyor back in the early 1950s, so we couldn't afford the nicer things in life.

Summit Hills was not a very fancy country club, but it was a country club and the people there had a lot more money than the people near where I lived did. So at the age of nine I became one of the only kids in my class at St. Henry's who knew that "Oldsmobiles are better." I used to caddy for Charlie Robkey. He didn't play golf very well, but he made a lot of money and had a beautiful car. Charlie would show up in his new Cadillac Eldorado convertible with the top down and his good-looking blond wife who had on a chiffon scarf sitting next to him. I would say to myself, "Self, I like what Charlie's got, and I think I want to do what Charlie's doing. I don't want to drive a

Chevrolet like my folks. I'd like to have an Eldorado like Charlie." I didn't even know what Charlie did for a living, and it didn't matter. Charlie made a lot of money and had many of the nicer things in life.

GOOSE NICKELS

As far as I could see, it wasn't what you did for a living that was important in life; it was how much you got paid for doing it. This idea was driven home not only by the members of the country club, like Charlie Robkey, but also by the other caddies. We all admired a guy by the name of Goose—Old Goose. He was about fourteen or fifteen, and that's old to a nine-year-old. We had a big area called the caddy pen where all the caddies would sit around waiting to go out on a round. We used to pitch nickels against a wall, and Goose was very good at pitching nickels. He could get those nickels to stop up against the wall almost every time. So while I was toting these big golf bags around for four hours to make two dollars, Goose was up there in the caddy pen pitching nickels. At the end of the day, Goose had more money than I did. I worked harder than Goose, but Goose had more money. He had the respect and admiration of everybody in the caddy pen—not because he could pitch nickels better than everyone else but because he had a lot of nickels. Making money became important to me, whether I made it by slow honest industry carrying golf bags or by quick strokes pitching nickels. It wasn't what you did; it was how much you made.

NO LITTLE LEAGUE

This view of the importance of money was also reinforced by my parents. They not only wanted me to learn the value of a dollar but to have a job and start making that dollar. Some of my friends from school were trying out for the Little League baseball team, and, naturally, I wanted to try out, too. When we got to the field, the coach

asked each of us what position we wanted to try out for. I said, "Short-stop." I didn't know what a shortstop was or did, but it was the only position I'd heard my friends talk about. Besides, I was short and thought the name sounded neat. That was a mistake; every ball hit to me either rolled between my legs, glanced off my glove, or bounced off my head. But I could hit the ball. I hit many of the pitches over the outfielders' heads. Then I hit one directly at the coach who was pitching. I made the team . . . playing left field.

At our first game I hit a grand slam home run to win the game four to two. My expert fielding was responsible for the other team's two runs, as well as for getting my uniform dirty. Well, the uniform was a problem because I hadn't told my parents that I had gone out for try-outs and made the team. When I showed up at home that afternoon with a dirty baseball uniform for my mother to clean, I was told I had to quit. "Baseball isn't practical; caddying is. You make money caddying, not playing baseball." Thus ended my short-lived but illustrious baseball career, reinforcing my view that money was important.

So it was through my exposure to the country club and the caddy pen that I first learned about money and something about making it. I also learned that it was possible to make money playing blackjack, poker, and gin. By the time I was ten, I was playing nickel blackjack. Since money was important to me, I was very upset when I almost always lost at blackjack in the caddy pen. I was whining to Goose about it one day, and he told me that I was losing because he and the other guys were cheating. He showed me how he burned the first card on the deck, placing it face up on the bottom so that you couldn't tell the difference between the top and the bottom of the deck. He would pick up the old hands and place them on bottom, but rotate the deck as he needed the known cards on the bottom. I didn't stop playing blackjack, but I did stop losing.

After being exposed to this money culture at the country club, I wanted to get involved in what the people who had the money were involved in. I wanted to know the right people. So I ingratiated myself with the right people, like Johnny Meyer. Johnny Meyer was the club champion. I became Johnny's personal caddy, which is how I got

out of Elsmere, Kentucky, the first time in my life. I went to Big Springs Country Club with Johnny in his big Chrysler convertible. He took me to Louisville to be his caddy when he played in the Kentucky State Amateur Championships. We drove from Cincinnati down to Louisville, and at thirteen years old I just thought that was the neatest thing in the world. I was in this cool car with this neat guy who was a great golfer, and I was going to a country club in another city. He was taking me because I was such a good caddy. It was only a seventy-mile trip, but for me that was a long way.

My involvement with the country-club set changed my perspective on the world and society. If I hadn't been involved, I never would have known about the nicer things in life. Where I grew up in Elsmere, if you weren't exposed to this "other life," you'd have never known it existed. It's the old situation where Joe Lunch Box is the happiest guy in the world. Joe Lunch Box is the guy who graduates from high school and gets a job at the local factory. He goes to work, tightens the four nuts on the left side of a V-8 engine, eats his lunch, tightens the four nuts on the left side of another V-8 engine, goes home, watches TV, and has a beer. He's happy because he doesn't know that Eldorados are neat, that chiffon scarves on the girl in the seat next to you are neat, and that McGregor golf clubs with the gold faces are the best and Spaulding Executives are second class. You want McGregor clubs with the gold faces. If you weren't exposed to this "other life," you didn't know it existed and you didn't know you were missing it.

The country club exposed me to the better things in life, and I wanted the better things. Well, that was a problem because once I learned about this "other life" and that it was better, I also knew that I was missing it. I was at a disadvantage to most of my peers because I wanted more than they even knew existed. I wanted to learn how to play golf. I wanted to be one of the guys caddies would come up to and say, "Good morning, Mr. Paul," just like I had to say, "Good morning, Mr. Robkey." I wanted to become one of *these* country-club guys, not one of those Joe Lunch Box guys.

Basically, what I learned at the country club was: It's not what you do for a living that's important. What's important is how much you

get paid for doing it. I could work hard like Joe Lunch Box or I could work smart like Charlie Robkey.

While I believed it was true that what you got paid was more important than what you did, it was also true that certain high-paying jobs required some higher education. Joe Lunch Box only went through high school, whereas the Charlie Robkeys and the Johnny Meyers of the world went to college. I realized that in order for me to make serious money, I was going to have to get some kind of education. In order to get a reasonable education, I was going to have to pay for it. I needed money to get an education. To make money I had to have some money, so I always had some kind of job since I was nine years old. I was one of the few guys in St. Henry's High paying my way through school. It was a parochial school, and I had to go because my parents were strict Catholics and they said I had to go. But my folks didn't have enough money to pay the tab, so I paid for tuition, books, and clothes. This reinforced my sense of how important money was.

I caddied until I was about fifteen. During that time I also worked in the pro shop and gave golf lessons. After I stopped caddying, I ran a golf-driving range for a while. Next I worked in a restaurant busing tables, and then I worked in a service station. My senior year of high school I worked fifty-five hours a week in the service station. I'd get out of school at two p.m. and work from three to eleven p.m. five days a week and then eight to ten hours a day on Saturday and Sunday. My folks were very lenient about curfew the whole time I was growing up. I could spend my money and do whatever I wanted because I was working so hard. They really let me do whatever I wanted as long as I didn't get in trouble. My dad's attitude was: "If you screw up and get in trouble boy, I'm gonna . . ." My parents laid the ground rules, and I followed them.

Once you know what the rules are, it's easy; just follow the rules and win. Once I figured out what it took to get from point A to point B, I did the bare minimum of what it took to get the job done. I drove my teachers crazy because I did well at what I liked and I did poorly at what I didn't like. All you needed to pass was Cs, so most of the time I got Cs. I did just what it took to get by—unless I was interested. If

I liked the course, I'd get an A. Every report card I ever received had the same comment: "Does not work to potential." I really drove my teachers crazy. And to top it off, I was elected president of the student council. I was not the type of person the teachers thought should be president. They wanted one of their pet student types who didn't drink, drive fast, or otherwise screw around.

I had a lot of freedom since I had my own job, my own money, and my own car. I bought a '53 Mercury on my sixteenth birthday with my own money: \$700 cash. Man, was it neat! A year later I sold it and bought a '56 Chevy, which was even neater. It wasn't an Eldorado, but it was neat. At seventeen years old in Elsmere, Kentucky, one of the biggest things in your life was your car—and did I ever have a car. I had the '56 Chevy lowered and shaved. I don't know if anybody will remember what shaved is, but that's when you take the emblems, the trim, and the hood ornament off the car, fill the holes with lead, and then repaint it. Then you lower it. I put a big V-8 engine in it and a Hurst speed shift in the floor. This '56 Chevy was hot! It was dark metallic blue with rolled and pleated leather seats and special carpet on the floor. So by the time I was seventeen, I thought I was well on my way to becoming "Mr. Paul" at the country club. I was working and making money, and I had a cool car with a pretty girlfriend in the seat next to me. Look out Mr. Robkey, here I come!