

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

WARREN AND I WERE COMANAGERS of the Kidder branch in the Bergen Mall, and I was making \$40,000 a year. That doesn't sound like a lot of money, but in 1958 it was big time. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was 600. A good dinner in a French restaurant with wine cost \$2.25 to \$2.50. A pair of shoes cost \$6 or \$7; a good suit \$40. (I think you can still buy a suit for \$40 if you go to the right place.)

I was twenty-eight, and I had achieved one of my first financial goals: sufficient earning power and a little money in the bank. I was on top of the world.

I was now ready to get married. I was determined that I would be married before I turned thirty. It was time for the postgraduate period of my personal life, which was to have a family and build stability. I prepared myself psychologically and emotionally to marry. The camera focuses a sunny environment, that right image comes in front of the lens, the camera goes "click," and there will be my wife.

But surprises were in store. One day I was at a piano bar in New York City, and I heard a familiar voice in the distance. It had the lilt, the strength, and timbre of a voice that belonged to a former cheerleader. Yes, it was that of Sandy Eakin, who had been so important in my college life. There she was, in person, in the lobby of the Algonquin Hotel.

I hurried over, feeling the rush of all those wonderful emotions we feel when we see somebody we once loved. I never expressed that

love to her, but now I can express it to myself. She was as beautiful as ever and was now a business executive. We sat and talked and talked. She told me she was engaged to marry.

She was in New York on business. We had dinner and totally enjoyed each other's company. It was still a fresh and pure relationship. At the end of the evening, she astounded me by saying she was going to cancel her engagement because she knew she was in love with me.

"We missed our opportunity when we were in college because we were too young," she said, "but now we're not so young anymore."

She stayed in New York two or three more days, and we were together constantly.

Now I had a big decision to make. This wonderful woman could be mine, but did I really want her? I reminded myself that if I were to marry this Waspy Connecticut Yankee, my mother would literally die, and in the end, I told Sandy I still was not ready.

I had decided not to marry this beautiful fantasy. Though she was a reality, she was more my lasting fantasy.

Shortly after Sandy left New York, a pretty blonde with a big smile came into my life. Her name was Barbara Browne. She was a nice Jewish girl who went by Bobbie. We met on a blind date, and soon we were going out regularly.

I was making a lot of money and feeling secure. My life was so different from that of my parents, who I had watched squabble constantly over money. They were Depression people, worried and frightened people, and money was the only thing that gave anybody in their generation any sense of stability. It's still true today. Everything is ephemeral except money.

I thought Bobbie was a great conversationalist, but in truth I was doing all the talking. I think this is true of most people when they are infatuated with someone else. One does the talking and thinks he is having a great conversation.

One reason I was attracted to Bobbie relates to my years in the Navy. When I first met her, she was living with her mother in Brooklyn in a neighborhood called Seagate. It was a nice area, one of the first gated communities. Her home was next to a major lighthouse for

New York harbor. Any warship or commercial ship coming toward New York would sight its bearings using the Seagate lighthouse. It impressed me, and whenever I picked up Bobbie for a date — before I actually rang the doorbell — I would look up at the lighthouse. In my mind, I was a ship looking at this beacon, which would tell me where I was and give me my bearings. I transferred this romantic image to Bobbie, my future wife.

I was infatuated. In many ways, Bobbie represented what I thought I wanted in a wife. We fantasize qualities in people. A lot of it is physical. We see somebody who is physically attractive, and we ascribe good qualities to them. A lot of it is behavioral. We see somebody with good manners and who is responsive, and we find all these subtle qualities attractive. We think that because of our “strong personality” we can influence this person to share our interests. I’ve come to believe that this is the biggest fallacy in relationships: we think we can change a person to be more like ourselves. If you could merge a man and a woman, you could have an androgynous self. That’s a nice fantasy.

As I got older and much wiser, I learned that you really can’t change people too much. They are what they are. But at this stage of my life, because I was on this fast track, this dynamic re-creation of myself, I thought I might be able to change somebody else, like Henry Higgins did Eliza Doolittle.

Bobbie and I dated, enjoying each other’s company and socializing with friends and family. I tried to get her to go skiing with me. She finally agreed, and we went up to Stowe, Vermont, a good ski area, with Rosemary Lacursio, a college friend of Bobbie’s. Rosemary was a good skier; Bobbie was not. On the morning of the first day, I skied with Rosemary. In midafternoon I persuaded Bobbie to ski, and we made our way down the mountain on a little cow path of a trail. We started about two o’clock; when dusk arrived, we were still picking our way down the trail. Skiing was not Bobbie’s strong suit; she was afraid of heights. A lot of people have that phobia, but I thought I could get her to ski by my sheer will. I was mistaken.

One day some time later, I got a phone call from Irv Putterman, who was the Browne family’s lawyer and adviser — a sharp lawyer. He

said he called to talk to me about Bobbie. He said he had the feeling that I wasn't going to marry her, that I was just leading her on. We had been going together for about a year.

I was temporarily dumbstruck. "What do you mean?" I finally said. "What right have you to tell me what my intentions are?"

He repeated that he thought I was just leading her on.

I said, "I don't agree with you," and hung up.

The next day, I proposed to Bobbie. No one was going to tell me what to do! Yes, he was a sharp lawyer.

I went to a jeweler on 42nd Street in Manhattan, bought a nice engagement ring, and kept it in my pocket for a while. Once you put a ring in your pocket, it's hard to get it out because you know that once it goes from your pocket to somebody's ring finger, that's it, baby.

Finally, I took the ring out of my pocket and gave it to Bobbie and proposed. She accepted, and I was very happy.

Two weeks later, I picked up Bobbie for a date at her new apartment in Greenwich Village. She was agitated, hiding her left hand with her right. She said she had lost the ring. Be calm, I said, not only to her, but to me. The thousand dollars I spent on the ring was about one-third of my net worth. Bobbie didn't know where the ring had gone. We were suspicious that her roommate, who was having boyfriend troubles, may have had something to do with the missing ring.

Several days passed, and we still couldn't find the ring. I went back to my jeweler and told him the story. He said: "What kind of girl are you marrying? What kind of girl — you give her a ring and she loses it? Are you sure you know what you're doing?"

That was a lot of wisdom.

I bought her another ring, the same as before. Now I had spent \$2,000 of my \$3,000 net worth. The day after I gave her the second ring, she found the first one — in her stocking bag. I returned the second ring to the jeweler, who shook his head, and gave me back the \$1,000.

We married in May 1959, and had a nice wedding. Bobbie's picture, taken by the famous photographer Bacharach, was in the *New York Times*. My parents were very happy. I had married a nice Jewish girl.

For our honeymoon, we went to Cuba, where Fidel Castro had

BULLISH ON LIFE

come to power less than six months earlier, and Mexico City. In Havana, we stayed at the Hotel Nacional, the top hotel in the country. One day I was at the pool, talking to my office, buying stocks for clients and myself, when two members of Castro's militia walked into the pool area. Wearing dark khakis and carrying machine guns, they looked at everyone menacingly. All the chitchat around the pool ceased. Everyone's eyes were on these two soldiers. Everyone was nervous. I wouldn't say frightened, but clearly nervous. The soldiers slowly walked the length of the pool, glowering at the bikini-clad women, and then disappeared. The chitchat resumed, and I continued to talk to my office. Then the soldiers reappeared, this time in bathing suits. Now they were just two very ordinary, pale seventeen-year-old boys who wanted to take a swim at the famous Hotel Nacional.

When we were in Mexico City, I was browsing in a bookstore and I looked up and couldn't find Bobbie. I looked around — no wife in sight. I went from stall to stall. She was gone! Then I happened to look down. There was Bobbie, on her knees searching for a contact lens.

Back in the United States, Bobbie and I rented an apartment at the Marlborough Apartments in Tenafly, New Jersey, and very soon, almost nine months and one minute after our marriage, we had a baby, Lauren Beth Cramer, born on February 22, 1960.

Bobbie was always happy being pregnant. She has a strong maternal instinct. A lot of women glow in a majestic way when they have a baby in their belly, and Bobbie was one. Obviously, she got heavy, but you have to get heavy when you have a baby. She enjoyed pregnancy, and I was happy too.

This was the postgraduate part of my life: hearth, home, wife, children, dogs, cats, the works. And all this was a great joy.

Soon after Lauren's birth, my mother-in-law, Cheryl Browne (later to be Cheryl Weil), said I should have my daughter registered in a synagogue. I was very ecumenical, and so was Bobbie. We didn't practice our religion, but I agreed to do this out of regard for Cheryl.

I went to a temple in Englewood, New Jersey, and I remember looking up and admiring the beautiful architecture — the arches and stained-glass windows. I heard the rabbis chanting and talking,

mostly in Hebrew. Then one rabbi pointed a finger toward me. I was not overly experienced with the procedure, but I assumed I was to go up to the altar.

I did and asked what I was supposed to do. The rabbi asked my daughter's name, and I said, "Lauren." He said, "No, no. What's her Hebrew name?" I hadn't thought about that, so I said, "Moish." He stared at me and repeated, "Moish?" You can understand his confusion; Moish, which means Morris, is a male name. Nevertheless, he registered my baby daughter as Moish.

To this day, my nickname for Lauren is Moish. Whenever I call her on the phone, I say, "How are you doing, Moish?" She loves it and I love it.

I have always looked upon work as a pleasure. There are twenty-four hours in a day, seven days in a week — that's 168 hours a week. And that's how many hours I worked. What do I mean by that? I mean I dreamed about my work; I constantly thought about my work; I breathed my work.

Working on Wall Street is much more than going to an office, working eight hours, and then going home. You have to read the papers, listen to the news, read books, meet new people who might become clients. For me, work was a total commitment and a great fulfillment. It was as true for me at the age of twenty-nine as it is for me today at seventy-seven. Work should be a pleasure, a passion. You spend most of your life doing it. If you don't find pleasure in your work, either you need a psychiatrist or you need to change jobs.

I was making a lot of money, and because the cost of living was so reasonable, even with a family, I had substantial disposable income. I used that money to invest in the financial markets. I learned about leverage, which is using borrowed money to buy securities. Brokers know it as margin, but there are other clever — and legal — ways of getting more leverage than just going out and buying a stock on margin. For example, you can buy a government bond and borrow 95 percent of the cost. You can buy a corporate convertible bond and borrow 80 percent of the cost.

What does this all mean? Let's say you buy a government bond that pays 5 or 6 percent fixed interest. Then, because interest rates

BULLISH ON LIFE

fluctuate, let's say the rate later slides to 3 percent. The value of the bond goes up as a result. In this case, the price of a \$1,000 bond may go up to \$1,300, depending on its maturity. You put up 5 percent of the money, so your \$50 per bond now becomes \$300. You have made six times your money.

I became a student of the money markets. That was somewhat unusual in the brokerage business back then; most people didn't understand it. Not only did I buy bonds for my own account, but I also recommended them to some clients who had a higher-risk profile. That's how I became a renowned stockbroker: I was showing people original ways to make money. It is true, as I look back, I was taking a lot of risk, but at the time it worked. The reward was there, and people looked only at the reward. The only time they looked at the risk was when they lost money.

It's odd that I became a risk taker because my parents were risk averse. They were conservative because of the times. When I was growing up, whenever it looked like I was going to take some risk, they'd advise against it. They meant well, of course, and when I took risks, it was not to spite them. My risks in business have always been based on careful analysis. As the proverb goes, "A turtle has to stick his neck out to make progress."

So my reputation spread throughout the New York area. I got phone calls from people I didn't know who wanted to become my clients, and I was making my modest monies grow rapidly.

At this point in my life, my children were being born one after the other. Soon after Lauren was born, Bobbie was pregnant again, and we had our second daughter, Kimberly Bodell Cramer, on May 30, 1961. (The Bodell came from my father-in-law's partner; we liked to honor people.) I had taken a thick book to the hospital to read while waiting, but I got only to page twenty-one. Kimberly was a quick delivery. I heard the loudest scream, and that was my newborn daughter. She came right out of the womb screaming. Today she still has a loud voice.

While all my children loved animals, Kimberly developed a particular love for horses. When she was ten, I bought her a horse, which she used to ride at a stable in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, where we lived at the time. She became a championship rider, specializing in

American-bred Morgans. The Morgan was originally a workhorse, a farm animal whose purpose was to pull wagons and plows, and yet it's a noble animal, with the most handsome face I've seen on a horse. Its body is a bit stockier than, say, an Arabian Thoroughbred's.

The only problem with Kimberly's love of horses was my allergies. I had always had allergies. I remember a time on a farm when I was about twelve. I went with a eleven-year-old girl up in the silo to do a little smooching. And, of course, I had an allergy attack from all the hay; I wondered if I was being punished for my thoughts. I was allergic to hay, ragweed, straw, dander, dust, and horses. You name it, I was allergic to it. So when I watched Kimmie ride — and I used to do that often because it was always a pleasure — I was in trouble.

Kimmie became accomplished in dressage, but I quickly discovered that it was difficult for me to watch her without making a terrible commotion sneezing and wheezing. Luckily, I found the perfect remedy: dry martinis. I used to drink three or four martinis at dressage performances, and then I wasn't allergic at all. I was probably drunk. Once she was in the national championships in Oklahoma City. I flew there to watch her, and when I arrived at the site, I took a deep breath, ran to the barn where she and her horse were, kissed her, still probably holding my breath, and ran back to the stands where there was less dander.

Lauren and Kimberly were born fifteen months apart. At that point, we thought we should take a pause in this reproductive process. But Bobbie was pregnant again three months after Kimmie was born. We agreed to have an abortion. I took Bobbie to Puerto Rico for the procedure because at that time it was still illegal in the United States. It wasn't a religious issue for me, since I wasn't a practicing Jew. It was a practical issue. Bobbie and I agreed that we needed to take a pause.

Nevertheless, about a year and a half later, Bobbie was pregnant again, and this time we had our son Douglas, who was born, appropriately enough, on Labor Day 1963. At least now we're getting some variety in the sexual outcome. Then, a little over a year later, we had our second son, Tom, who was born October 16, 1964.

I had now accomplished a major goal: Bobbie and I had reproduced ourselves, four times. The children were healthy too. There were minor problems here and there, of course, but nothing worthy of

BULLISH ON LIFE

concern. We were very blessed to have four attractive, wonderful children, and my wife loved being a mother. We were the all-American family.

Now I was making a lot of money, and we lived well. Bobbie's father, Jackson Browne, a schoolteacher and track coach who was divorced from her mother, spent a great deal of time with us. It could have been an uncomfortable situation to have my father-in-law nearly always around, but he was very respectful of me. When I was there, he went off quietly into the shadows; he wasn't overbearing. When the children were getting older and he was nearing retirement, he was over even more. He stayed over in our guesthouse when I wasn't home — and I was away a lot. It was a good situation. My children adored him.

My work and my home life were complementary. I loved my work, and nobody discouraged me from my working time away from home. Bobbie was very supportive. At the time, I thought I spent sufficient time with my children, even when they were babies. I used to diaper Lauren and Kimberly with cloth diapers and safety pins. I probably pierced my poor kids a few times, but not enough that they bled. Compared to my parents, I spent a lot of time with my children. Compared to what fathers do today, however, it was nothing.

My active relationship with my children really began when they turned four or five. I played tennis, skied, and jogged with them. Those activities remain important in their lives today, and I think that is because of my involvement with them when they were young.

My work kept me from being home, like most other fathers, at 5 or 5:30 P.M. I hadn't made the move to Wall Street yet; I still lived in New Jersey. I usually got home from work around 7 P.M. Now, most children are hungry around 5 P.M., and mine were no exception. So they had already had their three squares a day when I came home. But I wanted to have dinner with my children, and therefore my kids used to have four meals a day.

Before I sat down for dinner, there was my tradition of having a cocktail. My children would fight over who would make me my martini. They all were good at it. They all can make the perfect dry martini — five parts English gin to one part dry vermouth, stirred not shaken, chilled glass. Then we'd sit and talk. At dinner, I always

wanted to have intellectual conversation. So I would talk regularly to the children — not as children but as adults — about current events, about history, about their schoolwork, about relationships with other people, about the neighbors. Even though I don't think they were as interested in these talks as I was, the conversations were always lively at their fourth meal of the day.

As a rule, the first and last children in a family have the closest relationships with the parents. Lauren was our first, and she got 100 percent of the attention before Kimmie was born. By the age of four, Kimmie kind of wandered off by herself with her horses. Doug was more into himself, and Tom, the youngest, hung around the family the most. I didn't have a favorite. I believe in equality in a family, and all my children are above average. Just like the ones in Lake Wobegon.

By the time Kimmie was born, we were stretching the limits of our apartment in Tenafly. It was time to buy our first home. I chose to build in the boonies, a distant outpost in Bergen County, New Jersey, called Old Tappan. It would have been more traditional to go from an apartment in Tenafly to a home in Tenafly or some other developed community, but I never wanted to be where everybody else was. I wanted to go to an undeveloped community.

First of all, being a pioneer is always more fun. Second, I knew that you got better values as far as homestead costs. Third, being an anti-snob snob, I liked Old Tappan because it had no snob appeal.

We built our home from scratch, hiring a Swedish contractor named Anderson, who had built some interesting Scandinavian-style houses. I bought a piece of land on the cul de sac at the end his development, and I modified Anderson's Swedish-type thinking to create a replica of a Japanese home.

Japan was an important part of my earlier life. I had fallen in love with everything Japanese — the art, the ceremonies, sake, architecture, culture. I acted as the architect of my new house using my knowledge from my Navy period in Japan. I created a remarkably good reproduction of a Japanese home. We had a torii gate. We had a beautiful Japanese garden, with a big globe representing a moon attached to a tall tree, which I could pull up and down. We had waterfalls over the rocks, and inside we had tatami (floor mats of rice

BULLISH ON LIFE

straw), shoji screens, and scroll paintings. I really liked that house, probably because it was my first. It cost \$29,000 to build in 1961, in a subdivision where the typical house cost was \$25,000. Back then, \$29,000 for a house was a stretch. In the early 1990s it sold for more than \$1.2 million.

The economist in me wants to paraphrase a report on housing valuations published by the Leuthold group in October 2005. The average home valuation in 1960 was \$14,500. Forty-five later, it was \$234,400. It sounds like a major increase. Yes, it is, but forty-five years is a long time. It turns out to be a 3.3 percent per year compounded appreciation. With inflation, that's not so much.

Ours was a nice house, but after child no. three and then no. four arrived, it was time to move again. In 1968, I bought a Dutch farmhouse in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, that been built in 1786.

The Dutch are shrewd and frugal — I think the Jews and the Dutch must have intermarried somewhere along the line. The original owner of my farmhouse being Dutch used a mansard roof to save having to pay much tax. You had to pay only up to the roofline. Half the house was covered by the mansard roof and was therefore exempt. This was a tax shelter.

The house and surrounding property, nine acres in all, was phenomenal. The house had many small rooms; the property had a lake, a big barn, a guesthouse, and an Olympic-sized swimming pool. The pool, the first private one in Bergen County, was a big cement affair. No matter how cold the winter was, it wouldn't crack.

It was a wonderful place for children to grow up. It was a short block from the high school. Kimmie had her horses there. I had another chance to exercise my architectural curiosity. As we refurbished the house, we tried to figure out what was there from the original house and what had been added on over the years. Typically, these houses started small and were added on to many times. We recaulked the stonework in the front. We chiseled out all the old cement and replaced it with dirt like it was originally. In our dining room there was large fireplace, I wondered if it had been a walk-in fireplace that was used for cooking. It turned out I was right, and we restored it.

This was a wonderful period in my life. Because I spent so much

time at work, I really dedicated weekends to being with the children. We skied together, we played tennis together, we hiked together, we jogged together. We had a lot of fun.

We would pile into the Porsche to go up to Bromley Mountain near Manchester Center, Vermont, or farther north to Stowe, though Bromley was where we principally hung out. All the children enjoyed skiing. They had started out between my legs. After a while, I had to exert myself to keep up with them. They advanced quickly when they liked a sport.

I used every ruse possible to keep the children quiet during the long car trips to Vermont. We used to go by a semi-reform school called the Berkeley School for Boys, and I used to joke periodically that if the kids weren't quiet, they would be admitted as freshmen there.

One day Doug just wouldn't stop screaming and yelling and punching. So, we dropped him off at the Berkeley School for Boys and kept on going. I looked through the rearview mirror, and there was a contrite Doug, with tears rolling down his cheeks. We turned the car around and picked him up. I remember that he was quiet for the next half hour. Lauren meanwhile had sketched out a drawing of Doug before and after the Berkeley School for Boys. He had lost a lot of weight in the second sketch, and there were a lot of scars on his face. Our tactic served a purpose.

Another of our pseudo-punishments involved our wine cellar. It would probably now be called child abuse, but back then it was partly in fun. Usually it was Tom who warranted this punishment. We would have a meeting of his peers, his neighborhood buddies, in a mock court. I would set forth what crime Tom had committed, and certain neighborhood buddies would be the witnesses. I was the judge, and his best friends were the jury. His best friends would always put him in jail, which was the wine cellar. After fifteen or twenty minutes down there, Tom would be freed. (I'm glad he wasn't old enough to drink). I thought this was a humorous experience, but I found out as Tom got older, he thought it was a serious punishment. I never hit any of them, but this was probably worse than hitting them.

I just recently found out that when Tom was ten or eleven, he

BULLISH ON LIFE

was accused of a crime he didn't do. There was a full-length mirror on the door to the master bedroom suite, and one day I came home to find a big crack in it. Since Tom was the youngest, his siblings accused him of doing it. It seemed logical that he had done it, too, because he couldn't come up with a reasonable explanation. So for twenty-five years, I thought Tom broke the mirror. Then in 2000 I found out that it was Lauren who had done it. She confessed. Being a lawyer, she knew that she had passed the statute of limitations. Tom, I apologize to you for history's sake.

We used to give parties for the neighborhood and for all the friends and families of our children. Once time we had a Dixieland jazz band with the renowned saxophonist Pepper Adams, who had taught me the love of jazz as a teenager in Rochester. Other times we had ice cream wagons; we had horses and ponies. We had wonderful activities. The Cramer Memorial Day party was a great tradition.

We had an old-fashioned bathtub, and we used to fill it with pineapple juice and grape juice, and for the adults other ingredients like vodka and rum. After a while, the young people caught on. By this time, they were in their teens. I remember finding them in our guest-house at one party and everybody was giggling and having a good time. I saw Tom and Doug lying out on the floor. Lauren said, "Dad, don't even touch them. They'll vomit." I think she used the word "barf."

I was pleased with Doug's skill in chess. A professional chess player came to his grammar school, playing twelve kids simultaneously, and I was so proud that Doug beat him. (Today he beats me regularly.)

I was so proud of Tom, who, when his height was probably up to my belt, showed a talent for tennis. That was when he was in third or fourth grade, and Tom was then one of the best young tennis players in Bergen County. I had visions of his being a Jimmy Connors. Then, unfortunately like his father, he didn't grow, whereas all the people he used to play against grew a foot taller. When he was a ninth grader, he lost to them, and he temporarily lost interest in tennis. Now he's again active in the game.

I'm pleased that all my children learned to love skiing, and to this day they ski together out in Taos, New Mexico, where we have a ski

house — the “Taos Haus.” Skiing together and with their friends is something they will pass on to their children — skiing and tennis and the other activities that we all did together.

Before jogging became chic, each of the children individually would jog with me. At the end of a half-hour run, I used to reward Doug with a chocolate milk shake. Whatever calories he had lost running, he gained back.

All the children were good athletes. Doug was the captain and goalie of his lacrosse team at Cushing Academy, a prep school in Ashburnham, Massachusetts. Once he was playing a championship game, and I flew up to watch him. That day, I saw a characteristic that Doug still has: He can take a lot of punishment and get up with a big smile and keep on going. He was the goalie. Balls were constantly flying at him. His team lost, 13–2. Doug probably blocked about twenty shots, but thirteen got through. But he showed he could handle defeat. He showed that he could bounce back and be even stronger after being pucked to death with a capital P.

Lauren, Tom, and I attended a tennis camp. Tom was my roommate at this camp at some prep school in Massachusetts. It was probably one of those Dutch Reform schools because my bed felt like a bed of nails. Sleep didn't come easy, and I needed to have something to lubricate my body so those nails didn't hurt so much. Tom, who was probably in his early twenties then, and I went to a local restaurant, and we drank wine. We drank a bottle, which is normal. Then we drank a second and a third and a fourth. And that bed of nails was the most comfortable bed I ever slept on. And Tom went out the next day and won a tournament.

When we moved into our Dutch farmhouse, we found Danny Davenport, a carpenter. He was half-Scottish and half-Italian. He claimed he was a member of the Mafia. He was a former Hollywood set designer and a bit player in the movies. At the time, he was hiding from his third wife. So he was very secure building our wine cellar, the wine cellar of all wine cellars, an amazing place like something in the movies. It had all these secret little areas. One was the front of a barrel, a fake barrel. The front opened to reveal storage place for cases of wine. For the prized individual battles of wine, Danny built a little fake jail like you'd see in a cowboy movie. It looked as though you

BULLISH ON LIFE

couldn't reach the wine bottles inside, but all you had to do was simply pull out the bars, which were made of wood. The entrance to the cellar was through a trap door in the middle of the upstairs bar area.

Danny liked being in the basement, spending all his working hours there. He was a real character who hung around our home off and on for many years. I think he's the one who probably taught my children the facts of life. They loved him, and we were a surrogate family to him. He'd leave and then come back. It was his wanderlust. Sometimes I'd be angry with him because he didn't finish a project, and I'd ask him to leave, but six months later, he'd be back, and we were buddies again. That was how it was.

Attempting to find another way to employ Danny, I had him drive me from Franklin Lakes to Wall Street. There in my Porsche was my driver Danny occupying most of the car, puffing away on his stogie with me nestled in the corner reading my *Wall Street Journal*. I imagine we were a source of amusement to all the other chauffeurs in their Lincoln Town cars.

Danny once said to me, "Gerry, you've been a very, very important person in my life. How can I repay you? Remember, I'm Mafia. Is there anybody you don't like? Is there anybody who bothers you? Tell me and I'll take care of him. I won't kill him. I'd just shake hands. When he removes his hand, he finds a small bullet. He now knows what that means — he's got to stay away. This is how we do things in the Mafia."

I said, "Danny, this is beyond my comprehension. I appreciate your offering me these nice little gestures. I don't have anybody I want to beat up, but thanks anyway."

When he died, we grieved like he was a member of our family.