

Finding Our True Selves

“In the attics of my life...”

By Jill Matlow, Wall Street Dead aHead Family Member



Photo courtesy of pixabay.com

Let's all get in the time machine together, and go back to a decade which was much more idyllic. Now more than ever, we're yearning for the days of yesteryear when the things we worried about most were our cassette tapes getting tangled up when we removed them from our cassette players or if the boy or girl who gave us butterflies in junior high or high school had a crush on us too.

Flashing back to your 'blissful' teenage years, did you ever think you'd become the person you are today? I think I did. I slept in the attic with my older sister Jody and spent many days alone listening to my music (The Grateful Dead, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell...to name a few) and making collages. I dreamt of moving to a big city where I imagined my life would be exciting at every turn.

Who knew that decades later, I'd be working from home alone (listening to the same music in the background), writing articles instead of making collages and thankfully living in the city of my dreams.

“We can't return we can only look behind from where we came...”

Do you remember your teenage years and your dreams about the future? I've been fortunate to meet so many WSDaH Family members of all ages and I often wondered what they were like as teenagers. Did Dave have it all figured out by the time he was 15? Did Ian count his pennies as a teenager dreaming of becoming a CFO? Could Jackie have ever imagined she'd be working for a prestigious billion dollar company? Was Rose a sweet cowgirl back in those days or was she a quiet student?

It's time to find out the answers to those questions and discover which Family members had an imaginary crystal ball predicting their futures. Fasten your seatbelts...

"When I was in high school and like most teenagers, I didn't know what my life would turn out to be. I was looking forward to graduation and college but didn't know much beyond that. All I knew was that I enjoyed playing volleyball, going to the beach, listening to music and hanging out with my friends. I felt like I knew that I would eventually do something great and have amazing experiences but had no plans or specific goals. I always loved making new friends, meeting new people and doing nice things for people. I figured I would just continue to do so until I found my way.

Fast forward to college. I was going to SUNY Binghamton where I got into the business school. I didn't have a specific direction within business but again, figured I would follow my gut and eventually find my way. I just tried to stay optimistic as I continued to meet new people along the way. As my college experience went on, the stresses of coursework and not having a direction started to get to me. I grew concerned about what my future would hold and what I would do after college. While most of my friends had specific ambitions (i.e. being in finance or accounting), I was still soul searching. I tried to stay optimistic as I did before but the realities of the unknown started to take a toll on me.

When I was in college, my friends introduced me to the jam band scene which was very different music than what I was accustomed to. I jumped right in, head first into this unknown world. I loved going to concerts, unsure of what songs I would hear, how long the jams would be and which of my friends I would run into. In my personal life, the unknown was starting to concern me but at concerts, the unknown was exciting and thrilling. Eventually, my love of going with the flow and the unknowns at concerts became a metaphor of how I should look at life once more. I may not know which song is going to be played, but I will go in whatever direction feels right and I will find my way.

I tried to keep this mindset throughout my career. After 10+ years in the workforce, I now have more clear goals and direction but at times, I know I will need to embrace the unknown. While it might be stressful and I won't always enjoy everything that comes my way, I will still experience those great client meetings or an awesome 'Althea' jam to remind me why I love this long strange trip so much."

[Dave Geller](#), Account Manager, [Google](#)

"When I was a teenager, never did I imagine I'd be doing what I'm doing now professionally. You would think that would be an easy question but the answer is both yes and no. Yes in a sense that I chose to major in accounting in high school and never changed my major in college although I did pick up a minor in psychology (mainly to figure out why I majored in accounting JK). I chose accounting because it came easy to me, I didn't think I'd have to write many papers and there wasn't much public speaking involved. I was told it was easy to get a job once I graduated so that was about the extent of my knowledge which leads me to why no is also the answer.

My views of what a 30+ year career in accounting would entail when I was teenager was ignorant at best. I didn't have a clue what I was getting myself into. I would keep telling myself that I need to keep plugging along until I could get to a job I could enjoy. For the most part I have but I couldn't have imagined it as a teenager. When I was a teenager I enjoyed music and wanted to travel and I thought a career in accounting would be a means to those ends. Music is still as big a part of my life now as it was back then and I guess work has supported my musical journey. I have also been lucky enough to have jobs that have taken me all over the world.

So did I get to where I wanted to when I was teen? I guess for the most part I did. Did I have any idea what my chosen career would be like? HA. I wouldn't change a thing because from this journey, I have a wife who is my soulmate who is always willing to take any adventure with me, 3 wonderful children who mean the world to me and you, my friends, for whom I can share it all with. What a long strange trip it's been."

[Ian Hittman](#), Chief Financial Officer, [Gerson & Gerson](#)

"When I was in high school I found fashion as a way to feel confident in myself when I otherwise wasn't. Not one to follow high-end fashion or carry designer handbags, I would instead cut up my clothes to make them look how I wanted and found my sense of style as a way to both express my creativity and feel good about myself. I decided to go to Marist College, a small liberal arts school in Poughkeepsie NY, majoring in Fashion Merchandising and Business Marketing. I imagined having a career as a buyer, merchandiser or planner. I knew I was looking for something on the business side rather than design.

When I graduated in 2009, it was in the midst of the Great Recession and I took an unpaid internship working at a boutique PR firm. As an introvert, I quickly learned after a few dozen cold calls that PR was absolutely not a good fit. After a few months, I was offered a full-time position at Ralph Lauren working in CRM (Customer Relationship Management). I didn't know much about CRM at the time but it was a dream company and I figured I did well enough in statistics that I could learn how to write code.

Little did I know at the time just how much the industry of CRM would take off as companies were collecting more and more data about consumers digitally and connecting with consumers in ways they never had before. That job set me up for the rest of my career in a number of ways. I've now been working in CRM for the last 10 years and each new opportunity I've landed has in some way stemmed from that first group of people I worked with at Ralph Lauren. In my current role at Estee Lauder, I actually work for my manager who hired me for my first job out of college. This is the third time we're working together and she has truly become a mentor to me.

I'm beyond grateful to have found a successful career in CRM, working with a group of people who care about helping me grow professionally. However, over the last year or so I have started to question whether I've truly found my passion professionally. My true self is so much more than what I do at my job—it's also being a wife to my incredible husband (Hi Aaron), an aunt to two adorable nephews, a traveler of the world, a friend to people who fill my life with so much joy, and a member of society who wants to give more than I do from 9-5. I find meaning in my life by spending time with the people I love, seeing live music, and by finding balance. I hope that I can find work that leaves me feeling fulfilled at the end of the day. But I've learned to be grateful to have the successful career that I've found, which allows me to live all the other parts of my life that make me feel fulfilled in so many other ways.

So while I might not have imagined myself in a career where I analyze data and write code every day, I appreciate all of the opportunities I've been afforded, especially in our current environment where I can safely work from home (non-essential as my job may be). I look forward to being able to enjoy all of those other things outside of work again and until then I'll just keep truckin' on."

[Jaclyn Getman](#), Manager, CRM & Consumer Analytics, [Estee Lauder Companies](#)

"When I was a teenager and throughout my life, practically every skill I learned and practiced has prepared me for what I am doing right now:

- *I grew up a passionate horse lover. I went away to horse camp, rode weekly at a local stable, and took care of a neighbor's pony*
- *I was always involved in the music community and in my late 20s for 5 years, I presented a series of weekend festivals called 'The Wamboozy' in upstate NY. They featured Rick Danko, Buddy Cage and The Disco Biscuits, among others. Two stages, 24 bands and camping—we had a lot of fun times!*
- *I got my degree in the Arts: Photography and Television. This led me to my current union job editing at NBC, which fulfilled my early ambitions. After a few years however, I realized that this job did not align with my values*
- *Around 40, I began to study business and plot my escape. I was drawn to Real Estate investing, and began to do it on the side, becoming a licensed Realtor and working with distressed properties*

I had attended events at Arrowhead Ranch (a beautiful and historic concert venue and retreat) back in the 90s, right before it got really famous. Back then, it was a laid back and extremely kind hippie dude ranch. A band I knew from Long Island got a 'residency' there to play every weekend in the summer of 1990. I went every chance I could, rode the horses, and attended small events and festivals. The property was perfectly laid out, had a beautiful and magical energy, and at 100 miles from NYC, was very accessible.

As a real estate investor, I remembered the property and found it abandoned and in decay. With its history, I could not believe no one else was interested in taking on the challenge of restoring this property. At first I kept quiet about it, thinking someone would steal the idea. Then a voice in my head said to me 'No one else is going to do this, THIS IS WHAT YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO DO'. And so began my journey...

I closed on the property September 5, 2017. Since taking this on, the universe has constantly been opening doors, and I literally get 'a miracle every day.' I am so grateful and excited about restoring this property. I'm working with a great team and we have had a total of 7 successful events thus far. In addition, we have separated the barn into a nonprofit company serving as a horse rescue.

I am extremely fortunate to be fully engaged in my true 'labor of love'. Who knew that being a passionate horse lover many years ago would eventually lead me to The Arrowhead Ranch? I'm so proud to be a part of the restoration of this beautiful and historic concert venue and horse rescue. 'It's all a dream we dreamed one afternoon long ago..."

[Rose Barnett](#), Proprietor Owner, [Arrowhead Ranch & Retreat](#)

What were you like as a teenager? Did you ever dream about what you would be doing as an adult? We'd love to know! As for me, *"I have spent my life seeking all that's still unsung..."*