

My Mentored Life By Glenn Saltzman

I just finished reading **Outliers**, a book by Malcolm Gladwell, and it caused me to reflect on some parts of my life. In this book, Gladwell explains that gifts of superior intelligence and a willingness to work hard are not enough for success. He explains that **When** you were born, **Where** you were born and **Your Family** are probably more important factors in your realization of success in this world. He further explains that while a baseline of intelligence is necessary for entry into certain lines of work, higher levels than the baseline for entry do not necessarily increase one's chance of doing well.

I have always known that I was capable of doing academic tasks, but at the same time, realized that many folks with whom I grew up with, went to school with, went to college with and worked with...were smarter than me. Some of the most intelligent folks I have known lacked the "drive" necessary to succeed and others lacked the social skills. Almost all of my "bosses" were smarter than me, but not all were more successful. While reading the **Outliers**, I started to think more and more about how my "mentored" life has evolved.

Family.

First and foremost, I was blessed to be born into a loving family. **My parents, Lois (Stahl) and Frank Saltzman**, were consistent in the way in which I was raised, always encouraging, always trusting. I was the fifth child. The oldest, a boy, had died of spinal meningitis before I was born. The second, Ruth, married when I was two and didn't have a

large impact on my childhood. My fourth sibling, a girl, died of influenza as a baby before I was born. The third, Alice, was/is seven years older and served as a second Mom during my early years...studying with me, making sure my clothes were what young boys “should be wearing,” and serving as a cheerleader in my academic and sporting achievements.

My parents were older than most of my friend’s parents, as I was born while they were in their early forties. We lived on a farm and Alice and I helped with all of the chores such as feeding the animals, growing crops, driving tractors and hauling manure. Looking back, we never had much money, but I never once felt like we were disadvantaged...in fact, we seemed “better off” than most of our neighbors.

My Mom was a “stay at home Mom” and most folks believe that I’m stretching the truth when I say that I can NEVER remember coming home from school that my Mother was not waiting for me with milk, and some dessert she had prepared, ready to discuss my day at school. Neither she nor dad ever helped me with schoolwork, but Mom would sit with me as I did my homework and have me explain it to her.

Dad completed the eighth grade and Mom completed eleven years, moving from the farm to work for a family from during her ninth, tenth and eleventh grades so she could get more education. We lived on what had been one of her father’s several farms. During my first few years, Grandpa and Grandma Stahl (my maternal grandparents) lived in the primary residence on the farm and we lived in a smaller

house nearby...after my grandparents' deaths, we moved to the primary home, where I lived for most of my early years. My grandmother was quite proper and I went to their home, fifty yards away, for dinner one night each week by myself. I remember loving to use silver tongs to place sugar cubes in the tea my grandmother would fix for me.

Grandpa was quite involve in my life until he passed away when I was about ten...he would play croquet each Summer evening with me in our front yard (a fifty-yard stretch of grass between Grandpa's house, in front of our small house and reaching to the barn).

The older I became, the more competitive the games became, leading one time the family says, that when he teased me about how he had beaten me the day before, while I was helping him get out of his chair (He had Parkinson's Disease), I shoved him back into his chair. The story persists, but suffice it to say, I loved my Grandpa very much.

My Dad's brother, my Uncle Delph, played an important role in my young life. My father and Uncle Delph farmed their farms together, sharing expensive equipment. I saw Uncle Delph nearly every day and he was like a second father to me. I still remember riding to the mill with him in his truck and us stopping to buy ice cream cones (On Wednesdays we could get three dips for ten cents and we always got strawberry, vanilla and chocolate flavors on double-top cones that that permitted us to have the ice cream stacked like a pyramid.) It was really nice to have two Dads!

Lastly, with regard to my family, several important items:

1. No one believes me but I never lied to my parents, not once! I didn't always give them every detail, but I never lied to them...what kid can say that?
2. My father repeated the follow saying to me many, many times over the years and it has become my mantra...one that has proven successful over the years..."If you want to be successful, do what you say you're gonna do. If you want to be wildly successful, do it early."
3. My Mother suffered from recurring episodes of depression during my elementary and secondary school years and I am sure that that experience influenced my decision to enter psychology later in life.

All of the family elements necessary to become successful in life were present in my younger years...and by successful I mean success in work, in social and personal relationships. Some of my friends and colleagues have negative memories about their childhoods...my childhood memories are all positive.

Gladwell also mentions that **mentors** also have an important impact on one's life and I have had many who impacted my life. Beyond the direction and assistance I received from my

parents, and sister Alice, the following folks had a great impact on my life.

My Elementary Teachers.

I can still remember each of my elementary teachers...**Mrs. Brenner, Mrs. Amstutz, Mrs. Arthur, Ms. Cole, Ms. Rosie Fox and Ms. Bessie Fox (Twins)**. All were mothers to me...Mrs. Brenner/Amstutz/Arthur loving, encouraging and warm....Ms. Cole/Bessie Fox demanding accountability and Ms. Rossie Fox fostering creativity. What a team! Another important thing about my early education in this small rural school was that I never remember having a substitute teacher! What a consistent education for a young child.

My High School Teachers.

Most were good, not all were competent. I was starting to see that some teachers didn't really understand their own material. Several lacked the education or dedication. One teacher really stood out from the rest...Our Principal, **Mr. Groth**. Our school was so small that the Principal also taught classes (Twelve grades in one building with the average enrollment of twenty-two for each grade level).

During my junior year, Mr. Groth (We called him Charlie when we wasn't around) realized that several of us might want to go to college and that there was no advanced mathematics classes beyond Geometry. So, he taught three of us, Advanced Algebra and Trigonometry...in Study Hall! Later, when a college freshman and struggling in my

mathematics class, he urged me to come home for the weekend and tutored me Friday evening, all day Saturday, and Sunday after church...enabling me to return to college with enough new skills to do well in my college mathematics class... Mr. Groth and I became life long friends...he was the consummate educator and very important in my life. He taught me more than mathematics and I have tried to return those favors to others in my life.

I have had a life long friendship with my high school football and basketball coach, Mr. "Bob" Robinson and his wife, Elsie. In fact, I just spoke to them last week, in what has become a quarterly phone call...checking up on each other. They were surrogate parents for team members, inviting us to their home after school and practices, to check up on our progress with school, girls and life goals.

During the fall of my senior year in high school, my best friend's (Jim Steyer) dad, **Mr. Steyer**, brought each of us a brochure describing the NROTC (Naval Reserve Officer Training Corp) scholarship program. We applied and both of us were accepted. I had only thought of going to Findlay College to play sports, and had never envisioned going to The Ohio State University (OSU). The nine hundred dollars I had in the bank from 4-H and Future Farmers of America projects enabled me to graduate from OSU with out going into debt (I even used part of that money for Ruth's engagement ring!) I could never have done that without the NROTC Scholarship, that paid for Tuition, Books, Laboratory Fees and \$100 per month. Thank you Mr. Steyer.

College Years.

My only college mentor was **Howard “Skip” Knuttgen**, my soccer coach. A wonderful all around guy who had his head on right and related to his players in an adult and caring fashion...and I still email with him nearly every week. He got his Ph.D. at The Ohio State University and became a professor at Harvard University, and is still on the International Olympic Committee.

After the Navy.

Ruth's Uncle **Charles Weaver** was with the State Department of Education in Columbus, Ohio and recommended me for the Ph. D. program at Ohio State and later recommended me for a position at the State Department of Education in Columbus. One of the more caring folks I have ever met and one of the only folks, except Ruth, who never forgot my birthday! His mentoring and positive recommendations helped me professionally and personally.

Russ Getson.

I worked with Russ in the State of Ohio Department of Education and he recommended me for a job at Kent State University (KSU). I drove up to Kent on a Monday, was interviewed by the Chair and the Faculty and was offer the position the following day. I worked at KSU ten years and became Department Chair after six years. Russ and I were

close friends and colleagues and he was an inspiration to me.

Ruth Weaver Saltzman.

The most important person in my life has been my wife, Ruth. She is the best person I have ever known and is a role model for empathy and generosity. She is level headed, conscientious and devoted to her friends and family.

Observing Ruth live her life has been my biggest inspiration...I want to be more like Ruth! Together, we have made a great team and have had a great ride in this world. After nearly fifty-six years of marriage, I still wake up each morning anxious to see what our next adventure will be.

I have probably forgotten some important mentors in my life, but if they come to mind, I will edit this story. I feel blessed to have been mentored by some of the best, to have had an encouraging family and to have been in the right place at the right time (e.g., Meeting Ruth, NROTC opportunity, Ph.D. opportunity, State Department opportunity, KSU opportunity, Navy promotion opportunity, Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine opportunity, Retirement opportunity.)

Things have worked out for Ruth and me, not because of luck, but because we had supportive families, good mentors, were at the right place at the right time...and we were prepared and committed. Life gives each of us some bumps for which we aren't prepared, but as I learned in Psychology 101...a happy and well-balanced life is not living a life free of

problems, but rather how one deals with the problems they face. What I have, what we have, we have learned from others...and are grateful for all of those mentoring influences.

February 2013