



THE PERFECT PARENTS

Introduction

I decided to write this story on Thanksgiving Day, 2019. My son, Benjamin Allen Velie, (21) and I had just left the Pentecostal Lighthouse church that sits in the middle of West Melbourne, Florida. My father, Benjamin Philip Velie, who just turned 80 years old on November 18th, has been the pastor there forty-one (41) years.

The piece of wood plank in the photo, right, is from the floor in the room where I slept. Dad still owns the house, I am his property manager. We moved into that house when I was about 3 years old. The piece of wood plank is symbolic of my childhood. Don't get me wrong, my life was not bad. We simply did not know we were poor and going to church 3 or 4 times a week was normal. Dad said Jesus provided everything and we believed him.

It is only 960 SF of living area and all wood construction, including the joists, floors, frame, exterior lap siding, trusses, and roof. Yes, everything but the shingles. The house had no air conditioning or heat. Even the windows had wood frames. With the windows open all the time, and living on a dirt road, we had to bathe daily as the dust flew in the windows and settled on everything. The house we grew up in sits on concrete blocks 18 inches off the ground and has no foundation.

The house was modernized when my brother-in-law covered the 18 gap under the house with stucco. That was after Dad added the utility room and carport. When Dad added a fuel oil furnace for heat, it took space out of the small room Nick and I shared (Photo below).

Nick and I shared bunk beds in a tiny room that stretched from the wall by the front window (see photo on page 4 and window to right of front door)



to the fuel oil furnace in the middle of the house. On the bottom bunk, I looked over the side directly into the knot hole as seen in the photo. I could see all the way to the ground. Everyday Nick and I wondered what kind of bugs would crawl in next. We learned to appreciate spiders as our friends because spiders ate the other bugs. For a long time, we plugged the knot hole with a small white marble.

October 10, 2018, I replaced the flooring (photo on left) in that room with treated plywood. I cut out and saved the piece of floor plank with the knot hole that I had looked through thousands of times.

When texting the picture to my brother Nick, who lives in SC, he asked was I able to save the marble also. No, it was no longer there.

When we moved into the church parsonage, I was 16 years old. The parsonage is highly visible being directly across the street from Red Lobster on US 192.

Later in life when I visited my in-laws living in the Washington DC area, I went to see George Washington's plantation. The slave quarters reminded me of our home where I grew up on Wood Street.

Why Write This Story?

Some people hold being successful against me. The American dream of upper mobility and each generation living better than the last is almost dead, with exceptions. Upper mobility can be accomplished through education



or income building wealth (Income is not the same wealth). For example, only about 1% of us has a doctorate degree, about 6% of us have a master's degree. Getting a bachelor's degree puts you in the top 35% or so educated people in the US.

When I tell people, **I am the tortoise in the story of the "Tortoise and the Hair,"** they look at me like I'm crazy. It is true. I didn't even understand the story, we were told dozens of times in grade school, until I was about 40 years old. That was when people didn't want to hang out with me because I was wealthy, very educated, etc.

People want to know three things when they meet you: 1) Do you have money, 2) Are you smarter than they are, and 3) Can you be their friend? Number 1 & 2 usually eliminate the #3 because they are uncomfortable around you. I would be their friend but ----.

If you work hard and persevere, regardless of setbacks, you can succeed in life. Success can be measured in different ways. Coming from a family of nearly all high school dropouts, I was not expected to succeed academically. Mom told me about a dozen times over the years, "Take the teacher's attitude lightly," because I was following my cousins through school and a precedence had been set. This makes my 4 degrees all the more satisfying.

It is because of my success that makes me declare the title, "Ben & Jan Velie, Perfect Parents." My pursuit of education, adventure, and knowing the right life partner when I met her, somehow comes from Mom & Dad.

Speaking of life partner, I met Nancy at the SCUBA club where I worked part time. We were going out only two weeks when I told her, "If we are still dating in one year, I will ask you to marry me." I don't recall that she even replied. And she had plenty of time to run, including me going away for 98 days to Saudi Arabia. Nancy Velie (Knowles) and I have been together over 25 years and raised three kids. Our current home of ten years is 3,658 under air, 5 bedrooms, 2-1/2 baths, theatre, loft, pool, hot tub, sitting on a 4-acre lake. Success that makes me not want to travel because I can't get the same quality of life elsewhere. I know. I'm sorry. Go ahead, hold it against me.

Traditional Parents, or Maybe Not

Mom & Dad tried to be classic American parents. Like the TV show, "Leave it to Beaver," Dad worked to support the family and Mom "seemed" to try to stay home and take care of the kids. That she "seemed to" is a contradiction to reality. My perception is, like most American women, she was bored and had to get out of the house. That explains the years of volunteer work at the local public library.

She respected dad being the bread earner and did her best to get dinner ready on time, seven days a week, so it was hot when he got home. Every night we had a sit-down family dinner. No one started eating until everyone was sat down and the blessing was said.

Mom did not let us kids come between her and dad. Sometimes we had just one car in the family. If we asked her to do something after school, she would probably do it. But, if it would make her late for picking Dad up from work, forget it!

When JoAnn, Nick, and I were in Meadowlane Elementary school, Mom started volunteering to work at the School library that also doubled as a Public Library. Because she volunteered continuously for years, all 3* of her kids volunteered to work in the library before and after school. During the summers we did volunteer work or just hung out and read books at the library when Mom worked

When desegregation was mandated by Federal law around United States, Brevard County responded by eliminating the 6th grade at Meadowlane Elementary. Sixth graders were bussed across town to Stone Middle School on University Boulevard, between Badcock and US1. We spent 6th and 7th grade in the mostly minority school. My sister was first to go while I spent 5th grade mingling with the youngest African American kids I had ever seen.

Meanwhile, Dad got a union carpenter job building the St Lucie nuclear power plant. It lasted long enough



to pay off the family bills, including the mortgage on the wood frame house we lived in at 460 Wood St. According to the public records, Dad paid \$7,000 for the house in August 1974. However, I know we lived in the house for years before he bought it. No sooner had all our family bills paid off, including the house, that Dad became the pastor at the Pentecostal Temple of Faith.

Religiously is an Understatement

We were Pentecostal. We went to church four times a week. We went to church every night of the week when an evangelist was in town. We went to church religiously. But going to church that often was not enough for Dad.

He believed in praying like King David of the Old Testament. He prayed loud so we and the neighbors could hear him. Remember, the windows were open because we had no air conditioning. Honestly, as a kid, it was a little embarrassing hearing him pray while playing kick ball in the street.

At Mom & Dad's 50th wedding anniversary I stated that I cannot recall ever seeing my father (or Mom) doing anything morally wrong, much less criminally wrong. I have never heard him cuss, swear, drink alcohol, smoke anything, or even go near any night club or bar. He is the kind of man that sets an example to the point, I have never seen him go to a movie theatre. His logic was that someone might think he was going to an R-rated movie.

When I went hunting, he was my partner. Nick hunted with Uncle Ray. I have never seen him even consider walking onto private posted land. All those cold mornings I stood watching game trails with him yielded no game. That did not matter because it did not seem to be about that to him.

Mom was the same way. A converted Lutheran, she was Pentecostal when they married, and they wed in a Pentecostal church. She went to church and took me, sometimes even when Dad stayed home. Once, I saw her yell at a Jehovah Witness and slam the door in their face.

Mom censored our music and reading material. Once, she agreed to record a Barry Manalo album for us on a cassette tape. But the first time it came to the end of the fist side and Mom's voice announced, "Please turn tape over," we could never play it around our friends again out of total embarrassment.

As a librarian, Mom took censorship to a new level. Stuck between being a public library and being an elementary school library, she did her best to keep out books with sex, swearing, drugs, alcohol, or any thing a Pentecostal found offensive for little kids.

We heard hundreds of comments and stories about her workplace bantering with her more liberal, and usually more educated, coworkers and bosses. She would stand her ground, and for a while seemed to have decision making authority over what books were ordered for the library. It is possible. She was the kind of employee a manager dreads, like a lieutenant being placed over a SMGT, with so much seniority and knowledge, they can be hard to deal with.

Parenting Creates the Environment

Brevard County Schools That We Attended

- **Meadowlane Elementary [5 Years]**
- **Stone Middle School [2 Years]**
- **Palm Bay High School [5 years]**

American culture says, "You Can't argue with success."

If this is true, then "We must have great schools in Brevard. That 12 years lead to my earning the equivalent of 20 years of formal education!" "And, a love for learning to last a lifetime."

Eddie Velie, GRI, Real Estate Broker



Mom and Dad raised three foster kids at that house on Wood Street: Clifford Steedly (deceased), Valarie Standish (anyone know where she is?), and Laura Velie. All of them graduated high school. Mom & Dad even took in Mom's Army Veteran brother for a while. They also took in Mom's dad, my [grandpa Larson](#) who lived with us when they were on hard times.

It is impossible to know why Mom & Dad kept taking in foster kids. It is impossible to know why the other parents voluntarily let their kid live with our family. The only explanation is that they believed their kid would have a better opportunity in life living with our family (for years). In hindsight, the other parent's decision to let their kid live with us was superbly correct.

But how were they able to arrive at that decision? None of the kids in our family were grown for them to see an example of how their kid might turn out if they lived with us (Cliff was so much older; I can't remember him). The only explanation is my parents had, and deserved, a reputation that exuded a stable, Christian, faith based, moral environment, and it was so obvious, everyone could see it. Stable is an understatement. My parents only moved twice in my lifetime.

For a very short time Nick and I got the larger third bedroom. But when they took in Laura, our "double first cousin," she and my sister, both older, got the larger room. For a while, three older girls lived in the larger room. Nick and I got kicked to the tiny room because age is respected. Respect your elders is not just a saying.

"Double first cousin" deserves an explanation. It means that my father married the sister of my uncle's (his



Above: This is the only photo I have of the house as it was then. At 22 years old I was a produce manager at Winn Dixie. That job made the 1982 Camaro affordable even at 1980's 18% interest rate. I was living in the old house with my roommate, Russell Corns, a longtime family friend

Note: In the photo the house still has the original wood lap siding. The old aluminum awnings did little to protect against hurricanes, but the house stood undamaged sitting 16" off the ground on two concrete blocks. It was high enough that we played under it sometimes. Later my brother-in-law applied stucco down to the ground and Dad installed aluminum windows.

brother) wife. Raymond Velie married Dolorous Larson and Benjamin Velie married Janice Larson. Their six kids should be genetically identical to the *four kids in my family, right?

Something I have pondered much of my life that convinces me, and makes a strong empirical case for others, is that a child's environment is more important than genetics when raising kids. It determines the child's behavior. *And behavior is everything. Behavior* determines; politeness, talkativeness, does homework or not, follows



instructions, does drugs, smokes, cheats, lies, skips classes, reads book, plays video games, goes out, stays home, hygiene, wears makeup, personal appearance, leads, follows, both, talks back, respect for others, conforms to cultural norms, or not, gets an education, gets a job, rude, concerned, careless, cautious, etc., etc.

A bizarre fact: The only one of my uncle's six double first cousin kids (exact same genes) that graduated high school is Laura, and only because she came to live with us, and regardless of our wooden cracker box house in June Park. Had she stayed with her parents through high school, I believe she would not have finished.

For our family, and those that lived with us, we never needed anything, and we always felt safe, always. On occasion, Dad prayed and then we felt safe.

[Russell & Rusty Corns in 460 Wood St Living Room](#)

[Mom & Dad at a theme park with grand kids](#)

[Philip & Becky's wedding on old St John's bridge](#)

[Rick with a deer kill at bulldozer](#)

[Mom's Dad and my Grandfather](#)

[Dad with his brother Andy on his air boat](#)

What do Those Morally Perfect People do for Fun?

Dad bought his first air boat when I was about three years old and still owns one today. Many fond memories are from going out in the air boat or the 14' v-hull he has owned for longer than I'm aware of. I took after him in that regard. It is true that I bought a brand new Evinrude boat motor for the 14' boat, at 16 years old, before I even bought a car. That was while I was living at the church.

When we moved to the church parsonage, things changed. Dad began to cook dinner because

I am out of time for now. This story is in process. Please forgive any grammar or spelling errors and pointing them out to me would be most welcome. 😊 Today: 2019-12-09