

MY Last Lecture: Achieving MY Childhood Dreams

by Bob Eckstein

The following is an excerpt of my commencement speech at The Hamlin Refrigeration & Air Conditioning Vocational Institute on May 23rd. Although I am *NOT* terminally ill, in all honesty, I haven't been feeling all that great since, I would say, around April;

"We all have childhood dreams. They are the lifeblood of one's character and fortitude. In reexamination I see that mine have long hit the dust, like melons falling off a flatbed truck on life's bumpy journey. I stand before you now a man in a tail end of an emotionally draining midlife crisis. That said, I'd like to share with you what my childhood dreams were. You are welcome to do with you wish with this information. Here they are in no particular order:

1) **Start an Art School for Elephants.** I came up with this idea first. In first grade I distinctively remember having aspirations and every intention of one day opening a college so that this great land mammal may explore different disciplines of arts, which included not only painting, but music, sculpture, and dance. Now every well-connected, no-talent elephant with some art supplies is on YouTube, hocking clumsy self-portraits. A missed opportunity and one that I plan to stay bitter about for a while.

2) **Be the First Beginner to Win the US. Open.** What's interesting about this is I have not missed a single U.S. tennis championship in the past five years. Granted, I've attended as only a spectator but I have accumulated invaluable insight into what distinguishes the pretenders from the contenders. This looks like Rafael Nadal's year but this fall I begin taking tennis lessons. I'm just saying.

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3) **Invent a Time Machine.** When I was a kid, it was a dream of mine to go back in time. Again, it looks like I might have raised the bar too high as not only do I have no progress to report on this front but for the past twenty years it hasn't even been on my radar. I totally forgot about this probably around the time I realized not everything in comics was real. I have never in my life even taken a physics class or whatever it is I would need to take to start work on a time machine.

4) **Revenge.** Too bad about that time machine business, because it kind of went hand-in-hand with my childhood dream #4; kicking the you-know-what out of Johann Sebastian Bach. Ever since I was forced to take violin lessons as a little boy against my will I've wanted to travel back in time so that I could give the Baroque composer the beating of his life. I could go on, but what's the point? It's all self-explanatory and I have never had closure.

5) **Have My Own Remote Island Fully Staffed By Domesticated Monkeys.** Originally the intent was to have a tropical island overflowing with funny monkeys in suits waiting on me hand and foot but ultimately that vision was tweaked after recognizing the benefits of not having servants who fling feces at each other. This revelation notwithstanding, the bigger question now is what insight have I gained from all of this and taking stock of my childhood dreams.

What lesson I have learned is this: all of these aspirations have one thing in common—aside from the fact that none of them came to fruition—all childhood dreams, mine, yours...the dreams of regular day-to-day people out there....require one thing for them to blossom. Proper funding. None of mine aforementioned schemes got off the ground because I didn't have a business plan and some serious dough; the art school for elephants, the time machine and the necessary research that was going to be required the discover such a contraption, the expense of the pro tennis tour and employing coaches, advisers, etc., even the island chock-full of monkeys, feeding them, getting them shots or whatever ...all projects with expenses which quickly add up.

Fate has brought us all here together in this very special room, the Hamlin Refrigeration & Air Conditioning Vocational Institute Auditorium...a distinction and drive that will catapult us all to realize each of our own special childhood dreams. Let's stop blaming the big guy upstairs for dealing us a bad hand. There comes a time in everyone's life when opportunity knocks. For us in the unforgiving refrigeration and air conditioning repair business our ship has finally come in. It's the mother of all breaks and it's called the S.S. Global Warming. I am deploring the graduating class of 2008 to answer that door, seize the moment. The dream lives on. Thank you to all tonight for coming and congratulations. Good luck making the most of your certificate."

