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DEVIN HAS LANDED A PERSONAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY

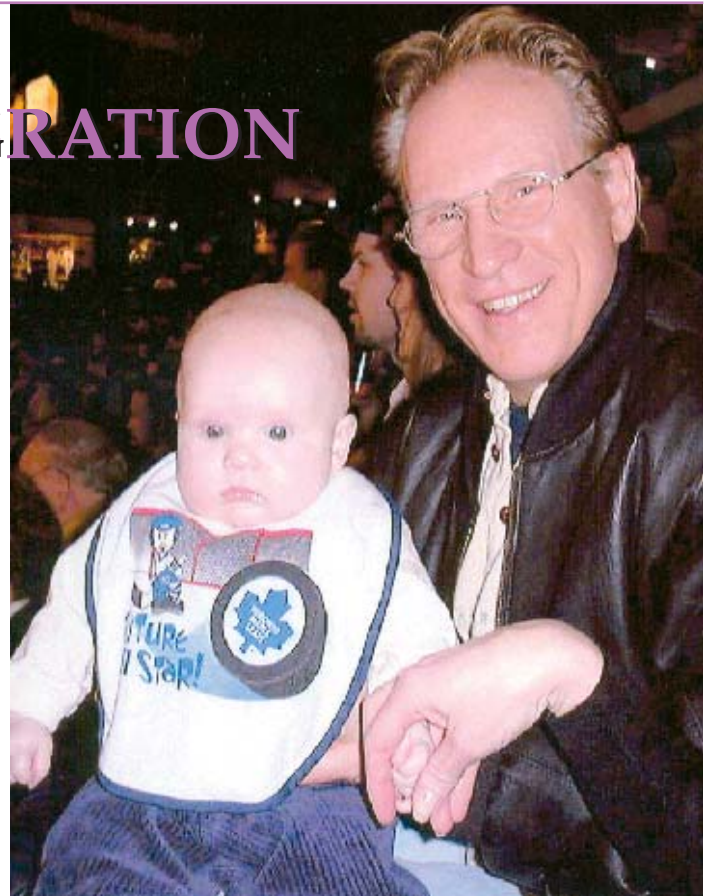
by James D. Downham

On September 8, 2000 my wife Lisa gave birth to a 7 lb. baby boy. After living a rather self-indulgent, unshackled lifestyle for 10 years, we decided to enrich our lives with the addition of a wee one to our team. We named him Devin.

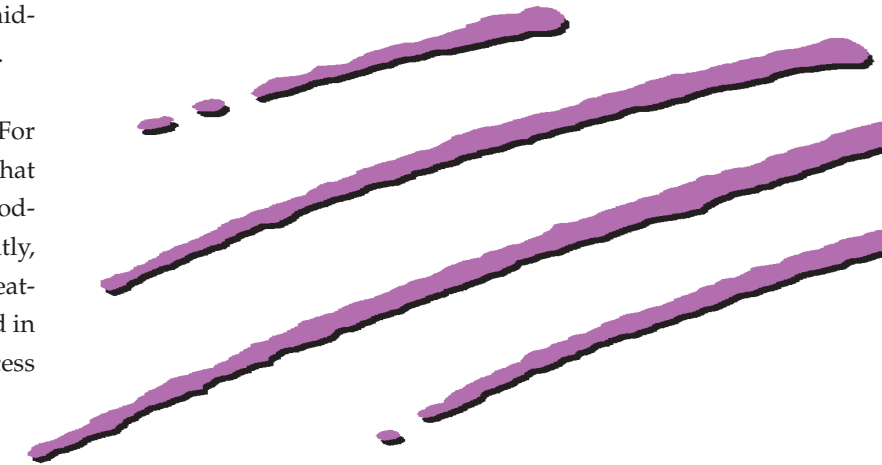
Lisa was the last of nine children and was raised by her mother, a single parent. And now for the first time, she has discovered the purpose and consequence of motherhood. I had been blessed as a parent on two previous occasions and those moments can be ranked as some of the most important events in my life. My beautiful daughter Dana was born in 1970 and my first son Shaun arrived in 1972.

Our legal obligation and self-imposed mandate was to raise Devin from infant to adulthood. We were responsible to integrate Devin into the family and furnish him with the guiding lights in his journey through life. It is popularly said that individual values, morals and personality are developed prior to the age of seven. After that, we will no longer be aiding in the creation of behavior but delicately modifying it.

A business analogy comes to mind with that thought. For me, it is the memory of managing a 40 year-old company that evolved around a union-based culture. The challenge to modify well-indoctrinated attitudes was enormous. Concurrently, I was setting up a company, in a different location and creating a fresh non-union culture. Today that company, rooted in its unique team based people-designed culture enjoys success as a premiere packaging company.



Devin and Jim Downham



Likewise with a newborn baby we were starting from ground zero and we had the opportunity to enhance his behavior rather than the challenge of modifying it. Lisa and I became coaches in this life altering adventure as we lead this infant into manhood. God delivered him into this world; it was our mission to help him navigate through it. His beginning point was that he was created equal and that he has no preconceived assumptions.

THE 2000 SYDNEY OLYMPIC GAMES

So here we were in our newly adopted city, Chicago, and for the next few months Devin was adjusting to the world outside of the womb as we were welcoming him into it.

Devin required 24/7 attention and we were fortunate that the 2000 Sydney Olympics provided that round the clock entertainment. The three of us watched the opening event, which featured a collective entrance by the North and South Koreans. And finally, the official opening was consummated with the passing of the Olympic flame from one great Australian female athlete to another and finally, Cathy Freeman an aboriginal female sprinter, lit the eternal Olympic flame in a cauldron of water. 10 days later Cathy was carrying the expectations of 19 million Australians and her aboriginal people on her back as she won a gold medal in the 400 meters race. The symbolism of these brilliant spectacles was an admirable representation of the non-political role that the Olympic movement has in global unity. Yes, I reflected, this was a very good lesson for our new infant.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

One of the momentous accomplishments of the Olympics was Marion Jones winning three gold and two bronzes medals. As a result of this Herculean effort she was chosen to be the Associated Press female athlete of the year. However, Marion had boldly predicted two years earlier that she would win five gold medals. Her pre-disposition and that of the media was with her disappointment not to have won the five gold medals. This was in spite of her winning more medals than any female track athlete ever had at a single Olympics.

In sharp contrast to the dissatisfied inclination of Jones was the exuberance of Eric Moussambani from Equatorial Guinea. He arrived in Sydney without a swimsuit and goggles and narrowly finished his 100-meter freestyle swim competition. "The Eel" as he was so warmly labeled was especially symbolic of the Olympic spirit. He surpassed his expectations by not only competing but also finishing the race. He was euphoric with the result.

The disparity in behavior between Jones and "The Eel" was quizzical. What creates such disappointment in one human being at such a positive moment while another is overcome with joy for merely participating? The simple conclusion was that in spite of her extraordinary achievements Marion Jones failed to meet her expectations, and "The Eel" surpassed his. Because of Marion's public declaration, she failed to meet her audience's expectations as well. This begs the question; how high should one set the bar?

These were insightful lessons from the world's foremost sporting event that could help to mold our son. What behavior did we want to teach Devin to harmonize our little Olympian into our life? What expectations would we want our son to establish and how should he achieve them?

OUR NATIONAL PAST TIME IS PAST ITS TIME

What do we do now with this little guy? We were drained from the agony and the ecstasy of the two-week Olympic endurance event when the first subway World Series since 1954 was about to begin. On this occasion the Yankees were battling the Mets rather than the Brooklyn Dodgers.

The pinstripes triumphed in the grand finale of America's favorite pastime. Unfortunately, the series and its outcome became subordinate to the Roger and Mike story. Roger Clemens, earlier in the season in an explicit attempt to intimidate Mike Piazza, hit him in the head with a blazing 98 MPH fastball. It rendered Piazza unconscious and incapacitated him for several games. As the psychological warfare escalated well into the World Series, Roger was fielding Mike's splintered baseball bat and tossed it in his direction as he ran towards first base. Clemens was later fined as a result of his alleged act of aggression. When visitors to the Cooperstown Hall of Fame admire the hall's newest exhibit, the most frequently asked question is, "so where is Mike Piazza's broken bat **(1)**"? We pondered the thought, is intimidation a tactic that we would want Devin to use to ensure that he wins in the game of life?

The Yankees seemed to validate that with the biggest payroll in the majors at \$112 million, money can buy a championship. Since the conclusion of the World Series they signed Mike Mussina for \$84 million. This should enhance their chances to repeat again next year. Not to be outdone, Tom Hicks, owner of the Texas Rangers, signed Alex Rodriguez for \$252 million for 10 years. In 1998, he paid \$250 million for the entire team and the baseball stadium. Is Rodriguez to blame if Hicks will pay that kind of price? For the deep-pocketed Hicks it was purely a business decision. Rodriguez has now been publicly

declared more valuable than the franchise. He is the franchise. How does that make the remaining 24 players, manager and coaches feel?

So what is the lesson here? Is it that it's a material world so therefore grab everything that comes your way and take the position that it is not my problem? Is this excessive greed or is it just the next cycle in the extinction of America's favorite past time? Has professional baseball, as we know it today, past its time?

This creates tough personal choices for this huge sports fan. Do we spend \$200.00 plus, for one 3 hour game to watch a grossly overpaid baseball player go 2 for 5, and dine on cold hot dogs? What would Devin learn from that experience? Or should we spend our entertainment dollar to educate Devin at the Zoo, the Field Museum, Navy Pier and the Museum of Science and Industry? We can do all of this and more for the same cost as one baseball game.

THE RUTHLESS BATTLE OF POLITICS

Now that my newborn son had been indoctrinated into some of the world's greatest sporting events, it was time to acquaint Devin with politics. Throughout the Fall we listened to all three presidential debates, copious hours of talking head and political rhetoric and the "Too Close To Call" election of November 7th. As they say in the UK, at the end of the match, the score remained nil - nil. The game went into sudden death overtime.

For the next 36 days the entire country was under siege by the state of Florida. Katherine Harris, David Boies, James Baker, the Supreme Court of Florida, were a few of the co-stars of the mini-series soap opera. What a coincidence, Jeb Bush, George Dubya's brother, just happened to be the Governor. This real life drama had more twists and turns than the 1997 "Wag The Dog" movie satire about the political spin doctors creating the impression of a war to avoid a political scandal. Robert DiNero and Dustin Hoffman were much better actors in the movie of course than the aforementioned co-stars.

The candidates spent over 3 billion dollars on the entire presidential campaign; the loser won the popular vote by over 325,000 votes but lost in Florida by fewer than 1000 votes. The loss in Florida yielded an accumulated Electoral College result of 271 for Bush and 267 for Gore. Finally, after 45 lawsuits had been filed, the highest court in the land decided the election. Partisanship prevailed throughout the entire process including the final decision from the Supreme

Court. The winners declared that the American judicial system had prevailed and that democracy had survived. The losers are still counting hanging chads and pregnant dimples.

Welcome son to the Divided States Of America. It was at about this time that we encountered Devin's first smile. He was obviously a quick study of the world of politics.

The presidential election had become the topic du jour for the late night comedians. It provided comic relief for a nation that was embroiled in the hostile political battle. But wait a minute. What are we teaching our children when Letterman gets outrageous laughter from his monologue describing out-going President Clinton as a pervert and incoming elect-president Bush as a dimwit? Isn't the President of the United States considered to be the most powerful person in the world? How can we, as parents, tell Devin that the President is a leader and role model for all of us?

WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT IN LIFE?

When a life-changing event occurs such as the arrival of a newborn child, the loss of a loved one or the threat of terminal illness, each of us endures a consequential metamorphosis. Some are touched more than others. These are defining moments in our lives. All of us go through a reality check as to what is indeed important. In our instance it was the miracle of life. Our priorities were reallocated over a nine-month period from two humans to three. Devin was the new kid on the block and it was our block. He became our focus and priority. All other issues were put into their proper place.

Events such as the Olympics, the World Series and a presidential election are engaging and become water cooler rhetoric. However, in the food chain of your own life's priorities, they are neatly arranged where they belong. In the future when Devin celebrates a birthday, he is likely to receive a birthday card that states, "These major events occurred in the year of your birth."

- Marion Jones became the 1st woman to win 5 medals in Olympic Track and Field.
- The Yankees defeated the Mets in the 1st subway series in 46 years.
- George W. Bush was elected the 43rd President of the United States.

Were we truly...When at some future date the high court of history sits in judgment on each one of us...our success or failure in whatever office we hold will be measured by the answers to four questions:

*Were we truly men of courage...? Were we truly men of integrity...?
Were we truly men of judgment...? Were we truly men of dedication...?*

John F. Kennedy

Only those of us who care to remember know the real facts, and they will certainly be embellished much like the proverbial fish story.

LIFE IS ABOUT CHOICES

Our little son has now been on this earth just over 180 days. Unbeknownst to him, in his short time, he has witnessed the biggest global sporting event in the world; the first subway World Series in 46 years; and the election of the 43rd President of the United States. Fortunately for him he really wasn't aware of these preceding events but he will be confronted with similar situations in the future.

So what do we learn from it all? These events and their newsreel highlights furnish choices to us as teachers of our children. They enable us to form opinions and ascertain a development plan, an integration strategy for our child. As parents of a newborn, we took on an enormous responsibility and obligation to share in the creation of their life-long values, beliefs and personality. It is our role to integrate this little one into our world and how we do it will have a consequential impact on his life. And as Dr Burdett wrote in January, "the work around integration should kick in as early as possible." **(2)**.

Most people have now heard the legendary story of Lance Armstrong winning the Tour de France in 1999 and 2000 after his remarkable recovery from testicular cancer. The Tour de France is arguably the most challenging sporting event in the world. The story has been exquisitely captured in the book "It's Not About The Bike." In the final chapter Lance writes, "The truth is, if you asked me to choose between winning the

Tour de France and cancer, I would choose cancer. Odd as it sounds, I would rather have the title of cancer survivor than the winner of the Tour, because of what it has done for me as a human being, a man, a husband, a son, and a father **(3)**." These were defining moments in Lance Armstrong's life, much like the arrival of our newborn son.

At the end of the day Devin, life is about choices and some day you will make your own. Until that time son, for your early role models in life, our choices for you are Cathy Freeman, "The Eel" and Lance Armstrong. Regardless of the accomplishments and material wealth, Marion Jones, Roger Clemens, A-Rod, Tom Hicks, George W. Bush and Al Gore didn't make the Downham team. We hope and pray that we make the right choices.

- (1)** The New York Times, November 26, 2000, "Everything It Seems, But Piazza's Broken Bat" by Joe LaPointe.
- (2)** Taken from New Role New Reality article, **LinxLetter** January 2001.
- (3)** "It's Not About The Bike" by Lance Armstrong with Sally Jenkins.