

Jason,

For a long time, well a year or so I guess, I have wanted to tell you a typical BS story. You have probably already heard it, one version or another. But, what the hell; sometimes even a story you've heard before is good to hear again. So here goes...

There was this big, old bull standing up on top of the hill. The young bull lifted his head and chewed some grass and saw the old bull up there staring down the other side at something. He wonders to himself, what the heck, and swallows his cud and trots all the way up there, post haste. "What in the world are you looking at down there?" the young bull asks. The old bull doesn't reply. Then he sees a small herd of choice looking cows. Oh, I get it, he thinks to himself. "Hey, let's run on down there and screw one of those sweet looking things," the young bull mumbles. The old bull bends his head over and looks at the young bull and says, "I've got a better idea." The young bull says, "What better idea?" The old bull replies, "Let's go down there and screw them all."

In other words, patience is virtue. Or maybe greed is good? Or whatever.

Anyway, every now and then, I think about the young bull I raised. Usually when we are talking on the phone and you are wanting to have things your way and I want to have it my way and the two of us start butting heads for some dang reason... And then I think about the old bull that raised me. Same problem sometimes.

Hummmm. Second story. Probably old news too.

You know what I was doing for a living to get myself through my last year of college, w/o any loans, while you were a muffin in your mother's oven? Yes? No? Well, let me tell you... anyway. Pretty much what your grandpa was doing to put food on the table and a roof over someone's head. Worked hard.

I spent one more (and one last) summer break from college working in that hellhole of an aluminum plant, in the pot rooms, in Troutdale Oregon where my old man, your grandpa Jessup, worked also.

Off topic...

Now days most of the plants are gone and the ones still operating, like the Alcoa plant up here near us in Ferndale (that I worked strike duty at a few years ago), are far more automated so they can produce more with fewer workers. Welcome to the new world.

And back to the story...

I managed to get called out for 13 double shifts that summer where we could make time and a half pay, and double time on weekends, for a second 8 hour shift; 16 hours days of HARD work. I figured if I had to work there that summer to save up for yet one last year of college I may as well take any double shifts they offered me and, if I could take

13 of them, I'd be able to set aside just enough money to last three terms and also buy myself my very own [Commodore PET](#) (Personal Electronic Transactor); probably the first PC ever sold. That was the summer of 1978, right after your mom and I finally transferred from MHCC down to U of O and we tied the knot in March 1978, and just before you came along, out of the oven. BTW, I used that PC to earn myself an A in a couple classes at college that year at U of O too.

Another side note: You were number two, as you probably know, as your mom had other ideas about number one.

Anyway, it isn't always easy being an old bull on the hill, or even the young bull. We do what we have to do sometimes. Your mom and I finished college and took you to Seattle in 1979 and we did OK for quite a while after that. Hard work, in and out of school, paid off for a long time. If I had it all to do over again, I wouldn't change a thing so far as you and your brother are concerned; except maybe not being such a hard ass on you guys sometimes. I always wanted to be able to be there for you guys, on the one hand, but, not being much of a miracle worker per se, I figured maybe it was better to let you find your own way without me, as much as possible, as they always say, on the other hand.

Moving right along.

Life can suck now days; sometimes. I still think the best way to make life better is to fall in love and have a couple kids of your own. But, if you are going to be a parent, one thing to remember is to make sure you are up to the task first. I was... and wasn't, I suppose. Lesson learned is that if you are not ready for it, or don't plan for it, it can be one hell of an uphill battle. Who needs that, right?

Good spot to tell you just a couple more suggestions (stuff I could have done better at myself):

1. Kick any bad habits, especially the ones that cost you money. Then save that money to get ahead and to get/do what really matters one day. Be a squirrel and save some nuts for the long, long winters.
2. Keep working hard while you are still a young bull. Being young and having energy is a great asset. Wish I was young again. You won't be young forever. So, take advantage of it while it lasts. And remember... if it doesn't kill you it will make you stronger.
3. Try to do whatever it takes to get out of debt and stay out of debt. Don't do what I did. Do what Lois does. Save up and then buy it, whatever it is that you need. And, if you can't, then pay off that debt ASAP in order to not become a slave to your own desires. Tip: Having a smart woman/partner in your life will help a lot on that front too. Better to save up and buy a house for cash, once, than to borrow and pay for it three times (which is usually what it ends up costing when borrowing for a home, or car, etc.).

4. Reach out and touch someone every now and then. You know, do unto others. People that help others, every now and then, as best as they can, reap the rewards. Others may not ever help you. But you will feel good when you help others. At least every now and then.
5. But, also remember, that you need to pay attention to yourself number one. If you become a basket case or your own worst enemy you won't be any good when it comes to helping anyone else either. So, keep your wits about you and make as many smart moves as you can. That way a couple stupid mistakes, every now and then, won't be show stoppers at least. The stupid mistakes are just part of that college education called life. At least that's how I see it.

Now; one last thing. The other day I was shopping for groceries and dang if I didn't start thinking about you and grandpa. Next thing I know I'm crying. WTF is that all about, you might ask? When you get older chit like that happens all the time. At least it does with me. My old man (grandpa) seems to be getting a softer heart too. So it must be old age.

You start out as a carefree kid, growing like a weed – phase 1. Then you go to school and learn way too much for your own good – phase 2. Then you get the job done in your middle years – phase 3. Then you actually grow up, if you are lucky, and begin to see what is really worth seeing – phase 4. Then you grow old and only have ideas to pass on – phase 5. That's life in a nut shell. Or, as some say, life's a beach, then you die.

So... like I was saying... I was crying for one simple reason – because you are so darn far away all the time and I never get to see you as much as I want. And I was crying because I was worried my old man wasn't going to last a whole lot longer as well. Then he would be even farther away than you are. Lois says I'll miss mom more than dad. That ain't really true. Male bonding is something I can't explain really. And, you know, either way, there probably isn't a fucking thing I can do about any of that also. So, I turned the corner at the store and went down the next isle and wiped the darn tears away and sucked it up. Then I smiled because I started thinking about the woman I married and how much I love her AND both of you guys AND my parents and family too.

See, life isn't always all that bad... if you think about it. So, there you go. That's my story(ies) and I'm sticking to it/them.

You hang in there. Just do your best, enjoy the fruits of your labor sometimes and I will stay proud of you. No matter what.

The old bull.