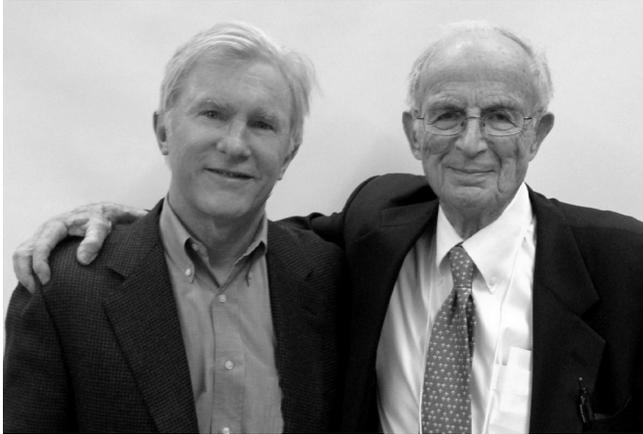


When I reflect on the cultural touchstone that is Star Wars, I realize that I have been blessed with Obi-Wan Kenobi-type relationships including a man I met while I worked for Governor Longley. He wasn't a hermit hiding out on the planet Tatooine but rather a world-famous professor named Ray Goldberg at Harvard Business School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Ray was and remains today one of the most influential figures in what would become known as agribusiness. In fact, he and another Harvard professor, John H. Davis, literally wrote the book on agribusiness in 1957. This is the process that begins with a farmer buying raw materials—seed or livestock—and ends with food in kitchens around the world. ... the world of “farm to fork.”



with Ray Goldberg

Ray had started working at age ten in his father's small feed, grain, and hay operation in Fargo, North Dakota, before earning a PhD in Agricultural Economics. In addition to writing books and teaching, Goldberg, like many Harvard Business School professors, ran a thriving consulting business.

Potatoes were Maine's biggest agricultural product, with poultry running a close second. But both sectors were struggling to compete with the likes of Tyson chicken and Simplot potatoes, which provided

McDonald's with its French fries. To help the farmers, I needed to understand why some Maine agricultural sectors were falling farther and farther behind. While still in Maine state government I sought Ray's advice.

Some agriculture policy officials may rely on collected anecdotal evidence, but Ray's approach was data-driven and systematic. As a result, his advice was sought by agribusiness industry participants around the world. One day, at his Harvard B-School office, we were discussing how the global food and agriculture systems were undergoing a dramatic transformation that had disadvantaged Maine farmers and other small independent producers. To understand the exact nature of those disadvantages Ray suggested that we seek comparative performance information for similar operations in other geographies. He also suggested that we seek the perspective of senior leaders in the food and agribusiness world, including the CEO of agribusiness giant Cargill. Cargill was, and remains, a towering agricultural powerhouse, operating in seventy countries, with 155,000 employees. I remember reading the book *Merchants of Grain* at the time and discovering the largely private world of companies like Cargill, Continental Grain, Bunge, and a few others that dominate the world grain industry. I didn't realize then how well I would later come to know them.

Soon I had the opportunity to meet with industry and policy leaders via the annual Harvard Business School Agribusiness Seminar led by Ray for many years. This opened the door to a bigger world and outstanding expertise that reframed my perspective on issues in Maine. Returning to the state capitol, I felt more empowered to tackle local issues and opportunities, and I was able to listen and interact in a different way. I gained confidence in my capability to contribute in higher impact ways that had not previously been exercised in my government role or encouraged earlier in my life. In contrast to feedback I had often received as a student, Ray demonstrated admiration for my abilities and the prospect that we could achieve

CHAPTER THREE - 3 FORGE YOUR OWN PATH

great things together. During our interactions, I got a glimpse of what “great looks like,” including the importance of being inspired and empowered by greater self-confidence.

This is the reason why when Ray said, “Let’s work together,” I didn’t hesitate to join him and other colleagues in an enterprise to engage in strategic consulting assignments for food and agriculture companies, as well as for government agencies, around the world.

Upon joining Ray’s company, AgriBusiness Associates, I became immersed in understanding the vast, complex, and critically important world of food and agriculture. The global agriculture industry exceeds \$10 trillion and is present in every country, with more than 500 million farmers supplying food for the planet’s 8 billion-plus human beings. Working in an industry addressing world food needs quickly became very rewarding on many levels including the industry’s important role in addressing human nutrition and wellbeing. Of course, agriculture is an ancient and highly respected vocation. George Washington put it this way: “Agriculture is the most healthful, the most useful, and the most noble employment of man.” Daniel Webster called farmers “the founders of human civilization.”

It’s important to note that Ray’s view of the agribusiness world extended beyond traditional boundaries, as captured in this statement: “We’re much more than a commodity industry; we’re a nutrition industry, we’re a health industry, we’re an energy industry, we’re an economic development industry. . . . Our ultimate customer is society at large .” - Ray Goldberg

It was gratifying to have the opportunity to meet with and support the work of independent farmers and food producers, and also to understand opportunities for innovation and novel relationships that impact food cost and quality from farm to table. Soon after our relationship started, Ray provided a memorable answer to my questions about the kinds of things we would be working on. “Well,

the newly elected Prime Minister of Jamaica needs to find ways to improve the future of the Jamaican food and agricultural economy,” he said in an offhand manner. Excited by this opportunity, I offered to help.

Soon, as winter descended in Maine, I was on a plane to Kingston, Jamaica, to meet with its Prime Minister, Edward Seaga. Seaga’s predecessor, Michael Manley had become very friendly with Cuba and its leader Fidel Castro. This was viewed as a risk in the United States regarding the spread of communism and unwanted Russian influence in the western hemisphere – close to American shores. So, a group of us began working with the new Seaga government to support democracy and expand Jamaica’s private sector economy. The goal was to benefit Jamaican citizens with a better alternative than Cuba’s dictator-led socialist system. Our work ranged from tourism and minerals to agriculture and food systems. One of the initiatives I worked on was to help restructure and expand the now-iconic Jamaican Blue Mountain Coffee brand. When I first met with coffee growers high in the Blue Mountains above Kingston, they tended to compete against each other selling non-branded commodity-priced coffee beans, not grasping that they would benefit far more from cooperation. Eventually, we were able to help them work together in a farmer cooperative structure, similar to the kind that Land O’Lakes dairy farmers and Sunkist citrus growers had used to their benefit. Our group had a great deal of experience with these producer cooperatives. The upshot was a brand that is still recognized by consumers around the world and sells at a premium price today. Years later, as I was building a business in Japan, I happily and regularly paid a premium price for servings of Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee at the Okura Hotel in Tokyo. I now think of these farmers every morning when I stand at my kitchen counter and brew myself a superb cup of Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee.

Our work offered outstanding opportunities to experience distinctive aspects of Jamaican culture including unforgettable reggae

CHAPTER THREE - 3 FORGE YOUR OWN PATH

concerts by Bob Marley's Wailers, Peter Tosh, and others at the famous Reggae Sunsplash festivals. Marley's musical themes were revolutionary and motivational including "live the life you love." At the famous "One Love Peace Concert" on (Earth Day) April 22, 1978, amidst our work there, Marley demonstrated his ability to be a force for good in Jamaica. He used his celebrity to enable political rivals Seaga and Manley to join him on stage in an important public symbol of unity after a violent election. He died in 1981 of cancer, but his legacy continues to contribute to the vibrant culture of the country. Despite an unfortunate incident of being held at gunpoint near the Jamaican village of Savanna la Mar during our work there, I have returned often in more peaceful times, sometimes with my extended family, to enjoy the country and its people.

Strategic consulting required constant travel. I worked with powerful multinational corporations such as Japanese soy sauce producer Kikkoman, the large Thai agribusiness conglomerate Charoen Pokphand, Mexico's state-owned petroleum company Pemex, and Wilbur-Ellis a large crop protection company based in San Francisco. I went to Cuban bakeries in Miami to find out how many were using high-gluten flour so I could advise my client Bay State Milling, a Boston flour company, on where to build a new mill. I advised Northeastern dairy cooperatives on broad-ranging collaborative ventures including the acquisition of HP Hood, and I helped the Aalsmeer Flower Auction in Holland expand its presence in America. Client assignments ranged from the California wine business, China's state farm organization, Florida citrus operations, the hops industry, livestock and poultry production, seafood and fisheries, grain for feed and food, crop protection, plant and animal genetics, fuel ethanol production, and assignments with Lazard Freres, Continental Grain, Archer-Daniels-Midland, and others to assess the industry impact of breakthroughs in biotechnology.

My horizons continued to expand via travel, novel experiences, and access to thought leaders. When you are associated

WAVE MAKING : INSPIRED BY IMPACT

with a business guru like Ray Goldberg, one of the preeminent wave makers in his field, the inbound flow of information, insights, and professional relationships creates a powerful firehose. As an example, in my role advising corporate boards on important strategic issues, I consulted with Minneapolis-based food giant General Mills, headed by an executive named E. Robert “Bob” Kinney, about possible acquisitions and partnerships in Mexico. This along with dozens of other assignments provided me with industry expertise but also an extraordinarily helpful framework of “what great looks like” in business. How to identify attractive markets and how to win against competitors.

Being a consultant with a constantly rotating roster of clients led to the accumulation of experiences in a wider variety of circumstances and at a far faster pace than would be common working in just one organization. New assignments every couple of months, caused me to plunge into new information pools about completely different industries. I had to shift my thinking and adjust, continuing to be creative, thoughtful, and aggressive. This demanding work raised my intellectual ceiling. It was also useful to me that Ray had assembled an astute team of more than a dozen strategic consultants as collaborators, many of whom he hired from Harvard Business School. Three associates from those days eventually collaborated with me at IDEXX.

When I wasn’t flying around the world, I commuted between our office outside Boston and my home in Portland. It was two hours each way and that was valuable time for contemplating factors that made companies successful, and searching for insightful patterns and practices. I developed a checklist of the elements that influenced the success or failure of businesses.

Working with Ray was ideal for me at that time. Determined to make my mark on the world, I was trying to learn as much as possible about business as it is practiced at the highest levels.

CHAPTER THREE - 3 FORGE YOUR OWN PATH

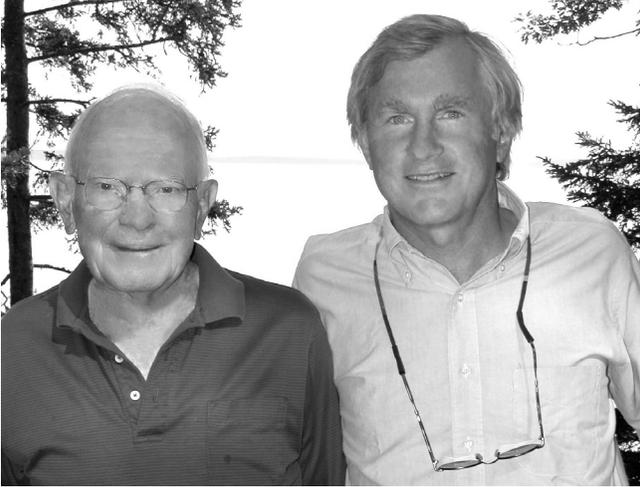
One day, First Chicago Bank reached out to me. They were calling in a loan on a large poultry producer in Arkansas and asked me to conduct a fairness valuation on the company—establishing a price for the business that both the buyer and seller could agree upon. I flew down and checked into a hotel. The bank officials had rooms at one end of the hallway, and at the other end were the rooms occupied by the poultry company executives. My room was right in the middle. All night, and for the next two days, I went back and forth, up and down the corridor between various parties to negotiate a price and agree on next steps. In a transaction involving the famous Little Rock-based financial service firm, Stephens Inc., the company was sold to the Bass brothers of Ft Worth, Texas, and later purchased by Tyson Foods.

It was eye-opening for me to learn about this aspect of business. My role was important, and my weekly fees were more than my annual income years earlier working in Maine state government. But I had started to feel like a highly paid fixer, brought in to fix other people's problems. During that trip to Arkansas, I realized I no longer wanted my income to be tied strictly to the number of hours I worked. In other words, it was difficult to scale up as an individual consultant. The work was lucrative and interesting, but I was eager to be a builder rather than an advisor.

Looking down the hallway of my own life during that period, I started to envision a new and more inspirational destination. It was motivational to get to know many entrepreneurs like folksy but shrewd Don Tyson. His father had started the family poultry business by putting chickens in the back of a pickup truck in Arkansas and hauling them to sell in open markets in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Chicago. Don went on to build one of the biggest food companies in the world: Tyson Foods. Many years later, I became aware of claims about practices at the company including shortcomings on environmental and labor matters. My experiences had given me admiration for some of the pioneers in plant genetics and farming equipment, and I was

WAVE MAKING : INSPIRED BY IMPACT

especially impressed with E Robert Kinney whose entrepreneurial career brought him to General Mills, eventually as CEO.



with Bob Kinney

Motivational stories encountered in food and agriculture inspired me to explore a new arena, the world of entrepreneurship. I remember coming across Theodore Roosevelt’s famous speech: “It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood.”

Part of rejecting conventional wisdom is listening to the voice inside that says that it’s time to rethink priorities, to explore greater fulfillment through new opportunities. This might take the form of an inchoate sense of needing to find a new direction. Or it might be very specific about a new plan.

I remember precisely the moment of reaching full resolution to create a succession plan for myself at Agribusiness Associates and launch a new venture. It was May 24, 1983, the day my third child,

CHAPTER THREE - 3 FORGE YOUR OWN PATH

Eliza, was born. There was something about looking down at her newborn face in the hospital bassinet and feeling her tiny hand clutch my finger that made me want to be my best self. The realization came to me with absolute certainty that it was time to put my energy into creating an enduring great company, working for myself and with a tribe of like-minded team members. This timing also coincided with a change in ownership structure at Agribusiness Associates where a client of ours, London and Continental Bankers became the major shareholder.

Highly rewarding experiences as a civil servant and a strategic consultant had helped me gain perspective on ways to create impact and achieve a fulfilling sense of purpose. Forging my own path required an accumulation of experiences in the world—almost layering them on top of one another like a sedimentary rock formation—to grow beyond the limits of my background. These helped me formulate a framework for further thinking about “what great looks like.”

Takeaway: Business entrepreneurship, impact investing, social activism, and public service have been sources of purposefulness, passion and happiness for me. While my path was inspired by the experience of others, it is authentically my own creation, and the role of serving as my own architect creates a great sense of ownership and satisfaction.

If you have not figured out what you want to do yet, don't despair, and don't settle. Take time to travel the winding path of exploration and discovery to find what is beautifully suited to you. Find that mission, that meaning, that reason for being—what the Japanese call *ikigai*—that enables you to live a life of your own authentic design. Hector Garcia, author of a book about *Ikigai*, has this perspective: “It is not what happens to you, but how you react that matters . . . it is much more important to have a compass . . . than to have a map.” Logotherapy created by Western psychologist and Auschwitz survivor Viktor Frankl also focuses on finding happiness by recognizing that

WAVE MAKING : INSPIRED BY IMPACT

we always have the freedom to consciously choose our attitude. And he warns about chasing happiness: “happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue.”