

Chance Encounters and Fortuitous Events

Turning Points

Story One: Meeting Zander

When I was a young woman I lived a carefree life without much sense of how events in my current life could impact my future life. I was creative and talented, singing, playing instrument, and acting in plays and musicals. Of course I was a good student and going to university was part of a natural process. In my life as a high school student I could do everything and still be an honor student. I had an optimistic view of the future, an easy path in front of me, and I did whatever seemed best at the time without any negative consequences.

Then I entered university where everything is more difficult and challenging and all the students are honor students. I became involved in campus activities, sang in the choir, and became part of a select group of students interested in putting on plays for visiting parents. I wrote a simple musical about life at university and produced it, I started dating attractive and smart young men. I did just about everything a girl could do to have a wonderful university experience except study. I wasn't so smart that I could pass all of my classes without studying, so after a time, I was asked to leave the university.

In those days, when a bright student failed at their studies, the university sent them away to experience the world, hoping that with time, they would change their ways and return to school a better person. This is how that happened.

I went to Los Angeles with my best friend who wanted to attend UCLA for the summer. I wanted to play. Her father was a very rich man and he supported both of us, gave us a car and money to live in Westwood Village and enjoy our summer. I received my letter from my university, telling me I was not welcome for at least a year. When I read it I was sitting by the pool of our apartment with a blond surfer boyfriend and it seemed so far away and unimportant, I threw the letter aside and didn't think another thought about it.

When the summer ended and my friend was returning to university, I stayed behind. We found me a very poor but cheap apartment and I went on job interviews for the first time in my life.

My first, and only, interview was at a Savings and Loan, which is like a bank. I was interviewed by the Director of Personnel in the main room of the business, across from the loan tellers. I was extremely nervous and frightened because I hadn't the foggiest what an interview entailed or how I should act. When it was over, he thanked me for coming in and shook my hand. I began crying and asked him if I got the job or not. He said he had other applicants and would let me know after the interviews were completed.

I had almost no money and was in desperate straits, but of course he didn't know this. I cried harder, making quite a bit of noise. He looked about for help.

Meanwhile, an older man had entered the building. He had silver hair and wore a silver grey suit. He walked over to the Director and asked him what was going on in a calm voice. The Director explained and, since I was still crying, the silver man took my hand, saying we would go to the back for a while and have a talk. He led me to the Board Room in the back of the building and sat me down. He was Albert Zander, a Personnel Consultant with a Ph.D. in Personnel Psychology. He worked with banks and savings and loans to help them fill upper level management positions. He told me this and I instantly stopped crying and we had long talk about psychology and careers as consultants. I remember wanting to be like him. In that moment it was clear to me that, eventually, I was going to return to school and become a personnel consultant.

Finally, we paused and he told me that he thought I would be good in the position and that he would tell the Director that I was hired. I was breathless! He had the power to make such decisions and would do it for me. I thanked him profusely. We went out to the Director and Zander told him that he thought I would do fine and should report to work on Monday. The Director agreed and I had my first job.

But these stories have their twists and turns.

After working at the Savings and Loan for about three weeks, it was clear that I was not very proficient at the details of handling money. My elderly supervisor, Miss White, was so frustrated with me that she would stand at my shoulder staring while I recorded money and paid mortgages. I kept making horrible mistakes and hated her watching over me like that. Finally, I knew she was going to fire me and I decided that before she could do it I would take another job. I went to the little sandwich shop next-door, bought a paper, and started looking for another job. Of course I was crying once again at my certain failure.

While sitting there, crying behind sun glasses, Zander walked up and asked what was wrong. I told him that, in spite of being a pretty smart person, I was a failure as a bank teller. He smiled and looked at the advertisements in my hands. He said, "Don't resign just yet, wait until Monday and see what happens. Now go home and enjoy your weekend."

When I appeared at my work place on Monday, I was told that I was being promoted upstairs! Miss White was very angry as she told me who to report to. I took my few belongs and ran to the elevator. Zander had found a better job for me, one that suited my skills. I was made the liaison between building contractors and homeowners with complaints about their homes. And I was given a raise.

Isn't life funny? After a year I left the job and returned to university where I completed my degree. Now I am a university professor helping young people find their way.