



My Life: from Cotton Patches on the South Plains of Texas to Negotiation Tables in China and North Korea

Robert Baldwin

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This book is the account of an ordinary person whose life experiences were atypical. He was the fifth of seven children born into the home of a rural minister and educator. The author taught in public schools for six years. Personal economics forced him to become a telephone man, earn a master's degree, and receive certification as a professional engineer. The breakup of the Bell System was experienced from the inside. The last three years of his telecommunications experience were with the United Nation, and afforded him the opportunity to travel to more than forty-five countries. His UN tenure was during the chaos of network privatization and the retrenchment of centrally planned markets. Concurrently with his interesting professional career, he was a caregiver of a chronically ill spouse and father of an active daughter. He was a serious runner among other non-job passions. A spiritual story is also entwined: believer in childhood, atheist in his forties who regained faith some twenty years later. Details of death of first wife, remarriage followed by divorce, and third marriage at age seventy-five are included. The writer has made eight trips to Moldova to work with orphans.

Excerpts

Chapter 2

... she had a gentle, soft facial expression in response to my smile. I took that as positive, but any response less than her coming over and slapping me would not have dampened my desire to know her.

Chapter 7 Walsenburg

"Don't you say a word," I said slowly in a low, threatening tone.

He again started to speak.

I slammed him against the locker a second time with much greater force than the first while still maintaining my strong two-handed grip on his clothing. Again the resulting sound echoed down the hallway.

"Keep your mouth shut, and don't force me to remind you again!" I shouted with enough volume to be heard in all rooms of the third floor.

Chapter 11 Naperville

My belief in the existence of God and faith in His omnipotence could not have been firmer unless embedded in my DNA. That sureness was a liability.

Chapter 14 Switzerland

I ran back toward the building, but not to the door of my exit. Once at the building I stood quietly with my back tightly against the outside wall. I stayed in that position long enough to catch my breath and be convinced neither the guard, nor anyone else knew I was there.

Chapter 15 Bon Coincidence

... the interpreter woke me. This time he had been instructed to be very forthright and brutally frank... the consequences were not a question of mere embarrassment... careers would be destroyed, and for some it could be a matter of life or death... The interpreter's eyes and voice tone convinced me not to risk that he was overly dramatic.

Chapter 16 Kerrville

Shirley didn't have a desire to die. However, she had experienced life down the hemodialysis path, and it had been horrid. This time there would not be a transplant off ramp, just an agonizing longer journey leading to the same end as the pain-free hospice route.

Chapter 20 Empty House

For the past few weeks, life had been a psychological bungee jump into a dark mental canyon. Free fall toward fear of the unknown then suddenly yanked back to a feeling of “all will be fine.” It was a repetitious cycle with my emotional elasticity placed under less stress with each progression.

Chapter 22 Bittersweet

I removed the gold band from the third finger of my left hand upon exiting Judge Brown’s chambers. My emotions were neither relief nor sadness, only a numb pale of unavoidable failure.

Chapter 24 Twilight Love

Seated on Janie’s love seat, we were having a pleasant conversation when I experienced a sudden rush of passion. Janie’s presence in the future would be different than the past in ways unknown to me during that blissful moment. I tentatively leaned toward her and we kissed, and Janie playfully said, “We had better be careful or we might destroy a good friendship.” I disregarded the warning and kissed her long and passionately.

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