

### “Growing up quickly”

This testimony shows just how I had the good fortune of great parenting by my Mom and Pop and great mentoring by Uncle’s Bast and Charlie and others that contributed to the great life I have enjoyed.

This is all about my two summers working at Uncle Bast’s National Yeast Plant in Belville New Jersey. By my best recollection it was summers of 1957 & ’58. Those were the years I would have been 18 & 19. What an experience for a young guy like myself and what luck I had for all the family that surrounded me. The punch line of all these stories comes in the last paragraph, but interim stories make my ‘growing up quickly’ point. Enjoy!

The cast of characters for this story are as follows:

- There was Pauline Lutz who before my time was married to a Joe Lutz and lived in Lansdale PA. She was American and from Kansas. I have no idea where, if anywhere, Joe ‘fit’ into the family, but my Mom knew him well from old country. We visited Pauline in PA often. He had passed on early in my time. She decided to leave Lansdale and gifted me the car I needed to work in NJ. It was a great 1941 fluid drive Dodge.
- Uncle Bast, who was known by all the ‘union’ workers at the plant, as “the old Man”. He was what I would consider top management of the plant. He lived upstairs in the main building in a big paneled office. I never recall ever seeing him ever wandering through the plant. The workers all treated me very nice. My relationship to the ‘old man’ and Charlie did not hurt I am sure.
- Uncle Charlie, who worked in one of the buildings where the yeast culture was being produced. He got married to Aunt Grace around that time and they lived in a condo in a nearby town.
- Adele Martini, who worked in the laboratory somewhere near the head offices. She tested all the cultures to make sure they were up to snuff. She also was for many years the lady friend to Uncle Charlie. They both were together for years and frequented us in NY often. She never got him to agree to marriage, somehow Grace did. Adele was wonderful as was Grace.
- Adele’s parents (Mom & Pop) lived in Bloomfield and where for many years, Charlie, being single, had a room. They were wonderful people. It is in Charlie’s vacant room that I stayed in for \$10 a week! ‘Mom’, was old at the time and I so did some chores there to help. Her husband “Pop” was there also but was no longer capable of doing much.
- Norman Lauterette was another college student whose father worked in the head office with Uncle Bast. He was a few years older, already in college and lived in the area. This was key because he knew all the hangouts which is where I met his ‘older’ crowd. You had to be 21 to drink in NJ but I must have looked the part. Norm & I became good friends.
- Donald Martin was my team mate in the dry yeast section of the plant. The two of us were a team during my second summer there. We would work 4 to 12pm making the dry yeast in a separate part of the plant. Donald was single, about 25, and was a full-time employee at the plant. Our outside connection was that we both liked to fish, he owned a boat, we were off all day so ‘a fishing we would go!’
- Gus, the engineer at the plant, managed the functioning of the plant operation on 2<sup>nd</sup> shift. His office was a little shack next to the river which ran by the plant. Each night, he would sit outside,

with the light from inside shinning over his shoulder, he would read the paper. The he would hang his head down and fall asleep till it was our shift's dinner time.

Now for the stories! I cannot recall how it came about that I was recruited to work at the yeast plant like my older cousins did before me. Obviously, there was collaboration among my parents, Uncle Bast and Uncle Charlie. There was no problem with me jumping in on the idea as I was an adventurer, however, there were problems which needed to be resolved.

As I introduced her above, Tanta Paulina decided to go back to Kansas where her family was. She decided to give up her 16-year-old Dodge and offered it up in a timely manner. I am sure the timing had nothing to do with the summer job, but luck was with me and I got the car. Mom and Pop drove me down to pick the car up and say a final goodbye to Pauline. Mom and Paulina kept in touch till she died. She and Joe had no children so when the lawyer in Kansas called and notified Mom of a modest inheritance it came as a shocking surprise to her, with lots of tears.

That problem resolved, next was where do I stay. Well I am sure Uncle Charlie worked out that part of the issue. I had just graduated from Fordham Prep and here I was, within a week, off to work in NJ. My mentor here was Adele, Charlie's ex lady friend. Adele took the time to meet me and introduce me to her parents who had the room where I would stay. Adele did not live there, but lived close by. The deal was great! I paid \$10 a week, had a radio, made my bed and each day my 'new' Mom packed a brown bag for me to take to work. I took my laundry home when I went to Lincolndale on many weekends. I came and went as I pleased even during my 2<sup>nd</sup> shift days. I felt like a member of the family.

Now at the plant working with all the union guys. Not sure where Uncle Bast resided at that time, he probably already had moved to Shrewsbury near the shore. My interaction with him during those times was only at infrequent family visits. Now, Uncle Charlie was different. I saw him either at the plant or visited he and Grace at their condo. It was wonderful for me because he was indeed my favorite of all the Lutz Uncles and all I can say is that he passed on too young. My friends in NY growing up all knew my 'Uncle Charlie'. He was just that kind of person and was that way with all of Uncle Bast's children and grandchildren. I believe he inherited that trait from his father, Groszpop, who loved being with the children.

Norman was a good friend and he made my evenings with all his friends, guys and gals, eventful on weekends and when I worked day shift. We had many good times together. I add him here because, as a person in an older crowd, he went out of his way to see I was included. His father and Uncle Bast were friends, but I know that is not why he extended his friendship. Let it suffice to say, that hanging around an older crowd was a real eye opener for me.

Actually, the same goes for Donald Martin. We enjoyed our days together. The plant complex consisted of a handful of buildings separated by a huge paved area that served all the buildings where trucks came and went. He and I were partners in the Dry Yeast building at one end. It took two people working the heavy presses to prepare the yeast for the dryer. The yeast pellets were used for baking. When dry, they were loaded into 50-gallon cardboard drums and sold to wherever? The drums were not unique, I have seen them used lots of places over time. They had a metal bottom and top. Top put on with a snap

clamping mechanism. Why I mention this, is because one day, I was loading these onto a truck with Donald and another worker. Even then, trucks backed up to a loading dock and we rolled the drums right onto the truck. This one day, we were dropping the drums onto an open bed truck way lower than the dock level. The way to do this to prevent the cardboard from collapsing was to roll them to the edge of the loading dock, and holding the top, guide it to the edge and drop in a way so it went straight down with equal pressure on all sides. Here is reason for this story. The other worker was doing the dropping. I rolled to him, he dropped, and Donald was helping at the bottom. ALL AT ONCE, a loud scream as the ring on the workers finger caught on the rim and the drum going down pulled the guy's finger skin right off the bone. Guy fainted, other workers threw him in a car and went off to the hospital. Donald picked up the guys finger skin off the floor and rushed it to the hospital. The guys finger was repaired thanks to his alertness. I was somewhat in awe watching all this happen. Talk about growing up quick.

Another first-time experience was at lunch one second shift night. There were only a handful of us working so the routine was that all of us would get together in the main plant lunchroom and open our brown bags together. This one night, I went to 'wake up' Gus, the engineer, as I always did to have him join us. When I wandered over and shook his shoulder he fell to the ground. He was dead, it was dark, I got frightened as I never ever experienced anything like that. I ran back, got Donald, we went inside to a phone and again, he managed the situation professionally. Much discipline was learned from Donald.

These experiences were all eye openers as I saw my family and friends come together on my behalf to help me grow up with an appreciation for what it takes to make it in the world. But nothing was more important than the day Uncle Bast left a lasting impression on my life.

It was about the end of my second summer, everything was super. The money and social life was good, and I was not looking happily to go to school again. So, I passed the word to the union boss on the floor that I would like to stay on when my time ended in a few weeks. The word quickly got up to the 'old man' and Uncle Bast called me to his office. It was a long walk because I knew what it was about but not what the outcome would be. In the most eloquent but tough way he finally said, "your fired!". Then he explained how important education is and the reason he arranged for my job at the plant was to make that financially possible. After his fatherly advice, I thanked him and while making my exit from his office, he added "Hubert, you can stay out the two weeks!" I am eternally grateful for his guidance and compassion.

Needless to say, my mother got the word about that and when I saw her next, she added "You can be around here as long as you are in school but otherwise go out and find your own way." Actually, she was a lot tougher than that! So, I grew up quickly recognizing the wisdom of their life experiences. When my grand-children, Zane and Nova read this someday I hope they understand the message.