

TOM HASCO

It's said that a person is shaped by both his genetic heritage and his environment: nature and nurture.

My ethnic background is Polish, German and Slovak. In the western Pennsylvania steel town in which I was raised, all three ethnic groups worked hard to maintain the ties to the old country, but in my family it was the Polish culture which was celebrated.

I was born in 1954 in Monongahela Memorial Hospital in New Eagle, Pennsylvania. About two years later at the same hospital, a Mrs. Montana would give birth to her son, Joe. You may have heard of him.

I was baptized at St. Hyacinth church in my hometown of Monessen. While other religious sects had churches in Monessen, Catholicism was the dominant religion in Monessen. Each ethnic group had its own Catholic church in Monessen; St. Hyacinth was the smallest, but it celebrated its Polish roots.

Monessen also had a really good library, a large new building stuffed with books and magazines. While growing up, each week my Mother would take me to the library and I would check out a stack of books. The following week I would return the previous week's books and check out another stack. That wonderful library made me the avid reader I still am today.

After attending kindergarten at the local public school, I was enrolled at St. Hyacinth school. It was a three room schoolhouse. First, second and third grade shared one room, fourth and fifth grade another, and sixth, seventh and eighth grades were stuffed into the third room.

I enjoyed my time at St. Hyacinth well enough, but I was picked on a great deal. I had three things working against me: I was smart, I was tall, and I had red hair. Those qualities made me different and a target. My Dad told me that I would have to fight to stop the bullying (don't forget that Monessen was a tough mill town), but it took a while for me to take his words to heart.

Still, we felt as though we were all a part of a family tucked into our small abode, but after sixth grade I attended seventh and eighth grade at the newly consolidated Monessen Catholic School (MCS). While I walked to St. Hyacinth, it was too far to walk to MCS so I was driven there each day. My Aunt Evelyn worked at the nearby City Treasurer's office, so it was easy for her to drop me off each day.

I fell in love with basketball at MCS. I was captain of the school team and the bullying stopped because I became confident in my own body and I finally did fight for myself.

Monessen High School (MHS...home of the greyhounds) was my next stop. I took the hardest courses the school had to offer (no Advanced Placement courses were offered) and got involved in all aspects of the school.

I played varsity basketball for all four years at MHS. Unfortunately, yet another fight was in my future, and this one was very serious. After an away game my senior year, as we got off our bus and headed to the locker room to put away our equipment, a sophomore who had just transferred to MHS from Detroit didn't like the fact that I wouldn't let him off the bus ahead of me. As we were walking to the locker room, he called me out and came after me with a large knife saying "this is how we settle things in Detroit." I took off my

large wool winter coat and wrapped it around my right arm and used it to fend off his attacks. Finally, someone ran into the locker room and got one of the coaches who stopped the fight. My attacker was suspended from school, and much was made, by some members of the community, of the fact that I wasn't. After many discussions with my father and mother, I decided not to press criminal charges against my assailant. That fact ended any remaining controversy.

I wouldn't wish those moments of terror on anyone.

I left MHS having been elected Junior and Senior Class President, and I graduated with highest honors.

I matriculated at Yale in September of 1972 and graduated with a B.A. in English Literature. While at Yale, I was elected vice-president of the Yale College Council (student government), was sports director of WYBC radio station and worked a bursary job all four years. I was also nominated for two post-graduate fellowships, winning a Keasbey Memorial Fellowship for two years study in the United Kingdom. I studied economics at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth.

I made the University of Wales select team and was captain of the team my second year.

I returned home three of the four summers during my college years to work at the Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel plant in Monessen (the fourth summer I worked as an intern for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in Harrisburg). I worked as a laborer at the Coke Plant making coke which was used to make steel. The job was backbreaking and dangerous, but I earned enough money to help pay for my education (and for my sister's too).

My first real job after returning home from the UK was for LTV Corporation as a Labor Relations Analyst. I assisted operating supervision at a large steel plant in interpreting contractual matters relating to the daily operation of the plant. I also represented the company during arbitration hearings.

It was while I was working at LTV that I met my first wife and the mother of my two daughters. We were married and I attended Suffolk University Law School and earned my J.D. degree. I was on the Dean's list and was active in moot court programs. After law school, I passed the bar in the state of New Hampshire and joined a firm in Manchester.

As an attorney, I specialized in real estate and land use matters and business law. During the course of my practice, I realized that I my true calling was in putting the real estate deals together. I was invited to join a commercial brokerage firm where I sold office buildings, shopping centers, warehouse facilities, and apartment complexes. I lived and worked in New Hampshire for twelve years until we moved to California in order to better educate our daughters.

Sadly, it was while we lived in San Jose that my marriage broke up. My daughters finished their education at Cupertino Union schools and Lynbrook High School. Both of my daughters graduated from the University of California, San Diego while spending their junior years abroad at the University of Edinburgh in the United Kingdom.

I met my wife Hilary in 1999 and we were married in 2002. Hilary and I lived and worked in Saratoga until we retired and moved to Windsor where we

love our life and friends.