

(Nexus)

Andrew Jackson Dupree, PhD, UCLA Auditorium, May 24, 2007

So the day finally came that all of that time and work and effort, not to mention expense had finally ended. The Dean had given me my diploma and shook my hand and eighteen years of formal education was behind me. I was no longer preparing for life. Life was here and now I was filled with doubts about my plan for emergence into the real world.

I was defiantly doubting my decision to get a PhD in history. Actually I had doubts about the whole PhD thing. I could have had my Masters with a lot less time and effort but I'm not sure what field I should have studied. I guess that in the back of my mind I thought that I could be an author and that a good knowledge of history would come in handy. So I just coasted along making sure that I didn't compete directly with my sister. I learned when I was very young that if I tried to beat Jackie at anything ... I lost.

I looked out into the audience and found my family in the sixth row. Dad looked satisfied and mom was touching the corner of her eye with a handkerchief ... I didn't see Jackie at first because her face was hidden behind her camera. Then I saw her smile ... her smile always made me happy ... she said something to me with an exaggerated move of her lips that I knew was ... 'I Love You' ... I had a picture of that pretty face on the wall of my office ... nothing unusual ... a pretty face with a pretty smile ... except it was on the cover of Time Magazine.

Never a child so lucky

For a while when I was growing up I didn't know that my family was 'well-off'. My dad never used the word, 'rich' because he always associated that with snobbery ... we were well off because my dad was smart and worked hard and succeeded. He always said that he was in the right place at the right time but there were lots of people that were there with him that didn't have his success.

I guess my granddad, whom I'm named after, was a flash-and-dash pilot who had flown jet fighters in the Korean War. He came from a one-time wealthy family from New Orleans but evidently he left that state under a cloud of suspicion and never went back. After the war he was hired by Western Airlines and he bought a house with an ocean view in the community of Manhattan beach which wasn't far from Los Angeles airport. Shortly after that he married grandma who was a stewardess (or air hostess or flight attendant ... take your pick).

Dad was born in 1957 and shortly after that granddad's Douglas DC-9 crashed on the runway at Santa Barbara airport while landing in a rainstorm. When the dust finally settled, grandma had the beach house and a new baby and not much else. She might have gone home to her mother but she was an orphan so she soldiered on alone.

For the next four years, with dad in the care of the woman next door, she waited tables at a local seafood restaurant. She could have made twice as much money working at the bar next door but she needed to be home at night with her baby boy. When dad started school she went back to Western Airlines for more money and less hours. She only flew a couple of times a week and was almost never gone overnight. From then on, life was good to mother and son.

Dad was a good student and a hard worker. He received a four-year scholarship to UCLA but he only needed three year to get a degree in Electrical Engineering. He declined to be the youngest engineering in a huge corporation and joined a small computer company in Culver City. The IBM PC was still a couple of years away but the industry was already in the transition from big mainframe's to distributed processing over arrays of smaller computers.

He wasn't happy with the way his company was going and he made several proposals to his boss that were turned down so in 1979, he resigned and started his own consulting company. Success followed success and in early 1980 he move the operation to the high-tech business park near Orange County airport. He hired a bright young programmer who had just graduated from UCLA and the rest, as they say, is history.

Mom and dad were married at Christmas of 1980, my sister Jackelyn Marie was born in 1982 and I came along in the Orwellian year of 1984. Dad was a computer genius in the time when that industry was eager for new ideas. He made a ton of money ... enough to be 'well-off' and in 1986 he bought the house on Newport Bay.

We actually lived on our own island that was part of the community of Balboa. There were canals that crisscrossed the island so nearly everyone had their own dock. We had a really big yard that was surrounded on three sides by canals and on west by the bay. Most of the neighborhood homes had been built by the 'Rich' during the 30's but now they had been taken over by the new rich ... the west coast-rich who didn't give a damn about the old country clubs. They wanted a sailboat that they could race in the Friday-night beer-can races, they wanted outdoor barbeques where they could invite their neighbors, friends, and maybe the guy that cleaned their pool ... and they wanted kids.

Jackie and me

Since my sister was nearly two years older than me she was always in charge. As a little kid mom would insist that Jackie take me with her. I really never had any say in the matter so we did what Jackie wanted to do. If there was a problem, she always took the blame. If I broke something, it was Jackie who suffered for it. That was fine with me until I was old enough to understand. She really took her roll as big sister seriously.

Mom and dad were sports minded, outdoor people and they expected their kids to be the same. Jackie was a star soccer player, a good ballerina and a winning sailboat racer. I followed her with little league baseball and swimming. She also competed in junior swimming but she didn't excel. Still, she was there to cheer me on at every opportunity.

