

Chapter 3: College Life at the University of Dubuque

Just after my twenty-third birthday, in August 1959, I boarded the train from Montreal to Chicago. I carried a suitcase and an athletic bag containing all my material possessions. After paying off the dentist in Montreal and my former employer in Nanaimo, I had about \$100 to my name. Knowing that a full scholarship awaited me, I felt pretty happy and unconcerned about my financial status.

After an overnight ride, I arrived in Chicago at midday. The connecting train to Dubuque was scheduled to leave from a different station several hours later. I walked to my transfer point through busy downtown streets in hot, humid weather. When I reached the other station, my shirt was soaked with sweat. Montreal's summer climate had not been pleasant, but the Chicago weather that day was much worse.

I boarded the westbound train and settled in for another ride. Dubuque was 180 miles northwest of Chicago, and the train stopped several times on the way. It arrived in Dubuque around midnight. Only a few people departed the train in the dark at the nearly deserted terminal. Fortunately, I found a taxi to take me to the school.

After finding out where I came from, the talkative driver told me that the city also had another college, Loras, where the Catholic students went. He was surprised to hear that I was Catholic and asked, "Why aren't you going to Loras instead of the U. of D.?"

"I'll be on the University's track team," I answered proudly.

"Yes, I've heard the school has many Canadian athletes," he replied. "But our football team has only American players. My nephew is the star quarterback."

During the remainder of our ride, he talked in detail about his nephew's play in a home game he had attended the previous year. I listened politely without telling him how little I knew about football. Finally, we arrived at the University's administration building, where he dropped me off.

A bright light shone over the main entrance of the four-story building. To my relief, the door was unlocked, and the hall lights were on. I walked in and surveyed the offices on the main floor. Not finding anyone, I took the stairs to the second floor. Once again, nobody was there—I saw only classrooms with their doors open. Walking to the third floor felt like being in a ghost town. All the doors were closed, so I went up to the top level.

Most doors were also shut, but I saw one open farther along the hallway. I walked over and peeked in. It was a large room with four single beds, three occupied by boys sleeping. The fourth bed was empty.

I hesitated for a moment. *Should I wake one of them up and ask for directions? No, most likely, he would not appreciate my disrupting his sleep.* Tired from the long day of travel and not having a better idea, I placed my luggage next to the empty bed, took off most of my clothes, crawled into bed, and slept.

The other three residents were surprised to see someone sleeping in the fourth bed in the morning. Their voices woke me up, and I recognized two from the St. Lambert track team in Montreal. The third one was also a St. Lambert trackman, but I did not know him. Waking up amid people I knew reassured me, and I told them I hoped to become the fourth resident in

their room. They informed me, however, that the space was assigned to an American football player.

The Canadians took me around the campus and introduced me to college life. One of the first bits of information regarded freshmen initiation during “Hell Week.” It did not sound very promising. “You have to wear a beanie for a week whenever you step outside your room,” one of them told me.

“If you’re caught not wearing it, you’ll be in big trouble,” added another. “You must also learn and recite a poem if an upperclassman commands you.” The poem began with *I am a silly, simple, scintillating freshman*. “Then, you do exactly whatever he or she tells you.” The rest of our group then entertained me with some of the awful experiences they had faced when first coming to the school.

My rebellious nature bristled at what I heard, and I wanted no part. Why should I let a 19-year-old sophomore boss me around? However, they explained that freshman hazing was a long-established tradition, and there was no way to avoid it if I wanted to be a student at Dubuque. Defeated, I went to the Student Union to pick up a beanie.

The student in charge of the beanies checked my name on the freshman list. “Looks like you are over twenty-one,” she said. “In that case, you are exempt during the entire initiation week.”

“You mean I don’t have to obey those rules?”

“Right. They changed the rules after the Korean War to honor the veterans returning to school on the GI Bill.”

That was great news! It saved me from the hazing most freshmen faced.



Left: Taking a shortcut to leave the fourth-floor room where I had “crashed” on the night of my arrival. I am pictured with three of the Canadian athletes and a bearded American student of the Dubuque Seminary. Center: In the same room with some of the members of the Dubuque track team. Right: An upperclassman is fitting a beanie on an attractive freshman.

Though I was hoping to room with someone I already knew, the housing office assigned me to a room with another foreign student—a sophomore from Iran. His name was Firouz Ahmir Fahradi, but students called him “Fi.” He had not yet returned from summer vacation, so I had the room to myself for several days.

The food in the buffet-style cafeteria was excellent. It offered a wide selection of menu items with unlimited portions. The Canadian trackmen told me the first day never to stand in line. "The school athletes always cut to the head of the line," said one of them, wearing a letterman's jacket with a large "D" on it. I had nothing like that to show I was a team member, so I was nervous about following his advice. The only time I cut in line was when I mingled with some of the Canadians.

The track coach was also the head football coach. In the fall, he was busy with the football team and told me to run cross-country to stay in shape. Although I did not intend to participate in cross-country and did not enjoy running long distances, I began to work out with the team, whose top performers were all Canadians.

Registration for the fall semester took place a few days after my arrival on campus. The process was strange because all students of the same grade level took identical courses yearly in Hungary. At Dubuque, I received a note instructing me to discuss my program with an advisor.

The advisor assigned to me was one of the English professors. After greeting me in his office, he leafed through my file. "Why don't I see your high school transcript?" he asked me.

I explained the reason and referred him to the letter from my Canadian track coach. He read several papers in my file, and I could see by his expression that he was not satisfied. "I don't see your SAT scores. Where did you take it?"

I did not know what SAT meant and asked him to explain. He became even more frustrated. "Are you telling me you were admitted without taking the SAT?"

"I am sorry, but I didn't know about that. Could I take it now?"

"Wait here," he said and abruptly left the office.

What will happen now? Why didn't they give me the test before? What if I don't pass? Would the school send me back to Canada? My mind raced through various disturbing scenarios.

The advisor returned with another staff member. "We don't understand how this could happen," the other man told me. "Come with me. I'll administer the test to you now."

He led me into an empty classroom. Once I sat down, he handed me a booklet, a pencil, and a sheet with multiple squares to mark my answers. He checked the clock and then told me to proceed.

This was the first time I had ever seen a multiple-choice test. There were both math and verbal questions. In the math section, most of the questions were easy to answer, although I had trouble understanding some of the wording. The rest of the booklet was a nightmare because it was so difficult to comprehend the questions. Initially, the proctor helped clarify what I did not understand, but as time passed, he told me, "If you don't know the answer, simply go to the next question. Don't guess!" At the end of the time allowed, he collected the material and said, "Go to see your advisor tomorrow." With that, he left me.

I was utterly dazed, and leaving the classroom took me quite a while. My morale was low, knowing I had not understood many questions. I blamed myself for being so unprepared. Apart from my first-year high school Russian language course, nothing like this happened to me. How could I pass the courses if every college test was this difficult?

The advisor was unhappy when I went to see him the next day. “You don’t have your high school transcripts. Your SAT scores are dismally low,” he began. “You should never have been admitted to our school.”

I knew I was in trouble. “What can I do now?”

“Because the track coach somehow arranged to bring you here, our Registrar has agreed to let you stay. You will be a part-time student on probation,” he explained. “You must maintain a C average this semester to gain full-time status. I’ll set up your courses now.”

The advisor took out a form, pondered a bit, and then listed three courses: English, Algebra/Descriptive Geometry, and Physics. “Be sure to see me if you encounter any problem with those courses,” he told me before letting me go.

Hearing that I could attend classes was a relief. Although I did not fully understand the difference between full-time and part-time, I was glad to hear that they would not send me back to Montreal.

After returning to my room, I met my roommate Firouz. He was not tall but had a robust body, thick, dark, short hair, bushy eyebrows, and “cauliflower” ears. I immediately guessed he was a wrestler.

“Hi, I am Firouz, but call me Fi,” he said while giving me a firm handshake. “It looks like we’ll share this room for a year.”

I also introduced myself, and we talked about our backgrounds. Fi had come from an upper-class Iranian family and was there to study chemistry. He knew quite a bit about the Hungarian Revolution and told me how frustrated he felt when the Western nations had not offered any help to my country. “Too bad that Hungary had no oil,” he told me. “If the Russians were to invade Iran, the American Marines would be there promptly to protect the oil.”

In our short conversation, I sensed that he did not like the United States. “Why did you come to America to study?”

“The Americans have the best schools. After I learn all I need, I’ll return to Iran.”

Later, I discovered he had applied to two more prominent universities but did not have good enough grades to be admitted. He planned to stay at Dubuque for two years and then hoped to transfer to the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago.

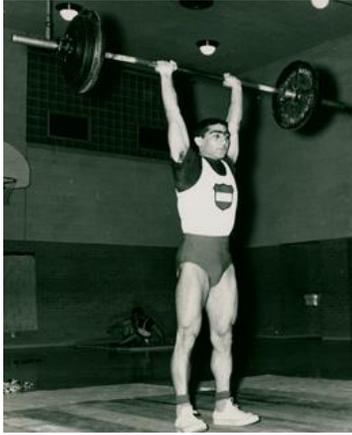
When Fi heard that I was on a tight budget, he went to the bank, where he had a checking account. He returned with a signature authorization form and offered me to sign. “When you need money, use my account,” he said. “Just make sure you leave some for me,” he added with a smile.

His generosity touched my heart. I thanked him profusely and assured him I would only use the account for emergencies.

The day after I took the SAT, the cross-country coach timed us to see how well we did on the 880-yard runs. I was glad to run after the tension of the morning. When we finished, he came to me and said, “I want you to know that you broke the school record.”

The news surprised me because I had finished third behind two other runners. “What was my time?”

“It is not a track record,” he explained. “You had the lowest SAT score in the school’s history.”



My roommate, Firouz, was a wrestler and a weightlifter. He was about five inches shorter than I but weighed a few pounds more. He was capable of lifting 250 lbs. over his head.

My teammates laughed, and I tried to put on a brave face. However, I was embarrassed and tried to explain that I did not understand most of the questions. The coach informed me that my low score put me on probation and I would not be eligible to run track that school year. The league rules specified that an athlete must complete at least one semester as a full-time student before becoming eligible for an interscholastic competition.

Hearing that I could not compete the following spring was a real blow. Then, as if that were not enough, a headline in the sports section of the next day's student newspaper read, "Hungarian Foreign Student Breaks School Record." As it turned out, one of the cross-country runners was a reporter for the newspaper. After overhearing the story at the track, he wrote the article for the paper.

At first, I just wanted to hide in my room. Fi and my Canadian friends talked me out of it and convinced me to look at the positive side of the news. "Your teachers will read the article and sympathize with you," said one of them. "We know you're not a dumb jock. Once your English improves, you'll do well."

Gradually, my self-confidence returned, and being a "record-breaker" stopped bothering me. Actually, it created some notoriety that I began to enjoy. The article was sympathetic to my case; it explained that I had only lived in Montreal for a few years and had not had the opportunity to learn English properly. The story was well-written and engaging to the students and the faculty. Even though I did not wear a beanie, it was not long after the article came out before most of the school's 625 students knew all about the Hungarian freshman.

Instruction began the following Monday. My first class was algebra. I sat in the classroom's front row with 20 to 25 students. When the professor entered the room, I stood up, following the Hungarian custom. To my surprise, none of the other students did. Embarrassed, I quickly sat down.

The professor introduced himself and began to read the class roster. He asked students if he had pronounced their names correctly. I was surprised. He was the professor—why should he care? I thought in the classroom, he would be an unquestioned authority. I began to realize that in American schools, the customs were different.

The outline of the topics we would cover that semester seemed like a review of my high school math classes. The homework he assigned also looked easy. I was confident that I would do well in that course.

I found the physics class more difficult because the teacher lectured most of the time instead of using the blackboard as the math professor had done. However, this class would include labs, and I always liked those. Performing experiments on a bench sounded like fun.

My third course, English, was the hardest. When the instructor returned the first homework assignments the next day, my page was covered with red marks. In that class, I was introduced to something new to me—Webster's Dictionary.

Hungarian is a phonetic language. Once we learned to sound out the 41 letters and digraphs, we always pronounced them the same way in every word. Spelling was easy. I thought that dictionaries only served to find the foreign equivalents of words.

Slowly, however, I began to appreciate the Webster's. At first, it was hard to find a word after hearing someone pronounce it. The instructor recommended that I learn two new words every day. I followed his advice and gradually increased my English vocabulary.

Although I was not eligible to participate in track or cross-country, I could play soccer on the school's team and was soon elected to be the captain. Several of our players came from foreign countries where soccer was the primary sport; we easily defeated most other schools in our conference and won the championship. It was not a varsity sport at the university in 1959, but playing on the team helped me establish close friendships with several boys and a



Under fine weather conditions and with spirits high, the Spartans started rolling early in the game, scoring two goals in the first half. It was Fred Stanger who kicked hard to score the first goal with a 10 yard drive in the left side of Beloit's net. Dubuque's second goal was the result of a smooth combination play which reached its final stage when Les Besser used his head for a pointer in the center of the net. As with Stanger's goal Besser was assisted by Juris Terauds.

Field captain Les Besser thinks that remarkable improvement has been made by the Spartan Soccer club. Reverend Heydinger, who is a devoted soccer fan, gained great enjoyment in attending from Dubuque. Misfortune, however, was on his side when a Beloit fraternity man backed into his car.

The U. of D. soccer team after a fall practice session. I am standing on the left and my roommate is second from the right.

U. of D. was affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. In addition to the regular class curriculum, students must attend Chapel every Wednesday. The school also had a Seminary, dubbed by the Canadians the "Angel Factory." The Seminary students were easy to recognize; they were older, better dressed, and more dignified than the rest of the student body.

Along with several of my Canadian friends, Fi and I frequented the Foreign Student Club. About 30 students from foreign countries attended the university, although most came from Canada and Mexico. In the club, I befriended a Mexican girl, Mathilda, and we began to spend

time together. Soon, she broke up with the seminary student who came from her hometown. She told me that they had dated for almost a year.

One Wednesday, we skipped Chapel and listened to her favorite records in the Music Building. A few days later, I received a note to see the Dean of Students. My friends warned me, "He does not favor bringing foreign athletes to the school. Be careful what you say to him."

"Nice to meet you, Leslie," the Dean greeted me warmly. He was probably in his late 50s, gray-haired, with a "minister-like" smile. He then complimented me on my academic progress. "I've heard you are the top student in your algebra class and progressing in your other two courses."

Perhaps he does not know that I was not in Chapel last Wednesday. I thanked him and waited to see if he had more to say. He did not waste any time.

"Because you are not eligible to run track next spring, we expect you to perform some duties on campus toward your expenses," he began. "You could work in the cafeteria or help to clean the schoolyard."

Working in the kitchen did not sound appealing. I explained to him that I was an experienced electronics technician. "Perhaps I could be useful with maintaining some of the electrical equipment."

"Those jobs have already been filled, but the man who installed the new speakers in our chapel told me he was looking for help. That job would pay you more than the campus assignments." He gave me a phone number to contact Mr. Harrington. "Let me know if he hires you, and we'll talk about your school expenses."

I hoped that was the end, but he switched to another subject. "It has come to my attention that you and Mathilda have been dating. Her father is very concerned about his daughter seeing someone who is not a Presbyterian."

I suddenly remembered that her parents were very religious and had contributed heavily to the school's funding.

"What would you like me to do?" I asked meekly.

"Of course, I can't tell you how to handle your personal life, but I would be much happier if she were dating a future minister of our Seminary."

The man was well-informed. The situation reminded me of the Hungarian Communists who bullied me into buying bonds to help "our North Korean comrades."

"Perhaps it would be better to stop seeing her," I offered.

"It's your decision. I'm certain you'll do what you think is right." He dismissed me at that point. Not wanting to risk my future at the school, I broke up with Mathilda a few days later, making an excuse that I had to find a part-time job and would not have any free time. I did not date anyone else for the rest of the school year.

Following the Dean's instructions, I phoned Mr. Harrington, who invited me for an interview. His home-based business, Sound Unlimited, specialized in audio system installation and repair. He had previously worked alone, but demand for his services increased, and he needed an assistant. After a short discussion, he hired me to work 20 hours a week, paying me \$1.50 per hour. I used half of my income for school expenses and saved the rest for a car.

I planned to spend the following summer in Chicago and join the University of Chicago Track Club. I contacted their head coach after learning about my ineligibility at Dubuque. He told me I could train under him during the school vacation. I figured that an automobile was essential to make my summer plan feasible.

Mr. Harrington was a very considerate employer. He arranged my working hours so they would not interfere with my classes and soccer activities. I helped him install and maintain sound systems in churches and meeting halls in Dubuque and the neighboring towns. When we did not have outside jobs, I repaired stereos and radios in his home. His wife always offered me snacks during work, and I became friends with their two teenage children. The job was perfect, and I worked for him 20 hours weekly during my entire Dubuque stay.

As Thanksgiving approached, I was helping one of my algebra classmates, Kenny, with homework. "Do you have a place to spend the vacation?" he asked.

"I'll stay in the dorm."

"I talked with my parents about you, and they invited you to stay with us for the holiday. Come with me to have home-cooked turkey!"

I had never eaten turkey, which sounded appetizing, so I gladly accepted his invitation. We took the train to Chicago, and his father picked us up at the station. The entire family greeted me at their house and made me feel at home. The next day, we had a fabulous dinner celebrating my first Thanksgiving Day in America.

The following morning, Kenny introduced me to two of his friends who lived in the neighborhood. They carried air rifles. Kenny pulled one out of his closet and said, "Let's go coon-hunting!"

"What's that?"

"We'll look for nigger kids and shoot at them. You should see them run," he said with a satisfied chuckle.

His words stunned me. I had heard that derogatory term on television, but this was the first time someone had used it in my presence. In addition, hearing that a nice, church-going boy would shoot at small children was simply too much. It took me a while to find words to reply.

"No thanks. I have some homework to do," I muttered.

Kenny shrugged his shoulders and left with his friends. He probably sensed my disapproval because he did not tell me the results of their hunting. That incident, however, stayed in my mind and marred the otherwise wonderful long weekend.

A week later, a teacher at the local high school asked our soccer coach if he could provide four chaperones for the school's Christmas dance. My roommate, two other players, and I volunteered for the job. When we showed up on Saturday evening, the teacher explained our duties. One critical task was to admit only students of that school to the dance. "Look out for the Loras College boys. Sometimes they try to crash the party," he warned us.

We took our jobs very seriously, and the dance was going smoothly. Then, sure enough, a group of Loras boys tried to enter. We blocked their way. After some pushing and shoving, one of the intruders challenged my roommate to a fight. "If you dare to step outside, I'll take care of you," threatened the boy, adding some profanity to make his point.

Fi kept his cool. "Let's go outside," he agreed. I went along, wondering if I should call the police. Some of the aggressive boy's friends also followed. I became quite concerned about the outcome.

At the side of the gym, the Loras boy took a hostile step toward Fi. However, before the bully could do anything, Fi grabbed his clothes and lifted him over his head like a barbell. "Do you still want to fight?" he asked the boy softly.

"No, Sir," came the humble reply.

Fi put the boy on the ground. That was the end of the skirmish. The group turned around and left in a hurry without saying another word.

Christmas vacation approached, and I decided to hitchhike to Montreal to save money. I had not done that before, but I heard it was easy. One of the Canadian track team members lent me his letterman's jacket, saying drivers were likelier to pick up students.

A classmate gave me a ride to Chicago early morning after classes ended. He dropped me off at the eastbound freeway and wished me good luck. I carried only my small suitcase; besides some clothing and my workout outfit, it contained food I had hoarded from the cafeteria for the previous two days.

The weather was cold, but I was used to it. Running in sub-zero temperatures during the Montreal winters had acclimated me to the cold. I was also lucky and did not have to wait too long to receive rides for the first half of my journey. By the late afternoon, I was already on the Canadian side of the border after passing through Detroit and Windsor, Ontario. A truck driver took me from there past Toronto. He dropped me off at the exit to a small town that was his destination.

At that point, my good fortune abandoned me. After the last ride, I stood on the side of Highway 401, but nobody stopped for me. The icy wind chilled my body. I realized that even though hitchhiking was cheap, it was probably not the best way to travel. Snow began to fall, and soon I looked like a snowman.

After a long wait, a passenger car stopped and pulled off the road ahead of me. The lone driver opened the passenger door. I rushed over and asked if he would give me a ride. The man waved me in. I gladly obliged. After tossing my suitcase in the back, I hopped into the front seat, closed the door, and the car took off.

After being numb from the cold for so long, it took a while for my senses to return. The car was well heated, but the inside air had a strange odor—alcohol. The driver began talking to me with slurred speech. I realized he was drunk. *Now what?*

I had to make a quick choice between waiting in the freezing weather for another ride or trusting the drunk's ability to stay on the road. I chose the latter but planned to leave the car at the first sign of a populated area. Traffic was very light, and he seemed to have control over his vehicle.

Jacques, a bilingual French-Canadian, was heading to Montreal to spend Christmas with his girlfriend. "Being a traveling salesman, I don't see her enough," he told me. "I'm going to ask her to marry me," he added between deep yawns.

I asked him if he wanted to rest and let me drive. To my relief, he accepted my offer and pulled off the road again. We switched positions on the front seat. "Wake me up when we

reach Montreal,” he muttered, promptly falling asleep. It looked like my guardian, St. Anthony, had rescued me again.

After driving a short distance, one of the roadside signs told me why none of the drivers had offered me a ride in that area. The sign stated, “Millbrook Youth Correctional Centre. Do not pick up hitchhikers!” The warning signs appeared every few miles. Luckily for me, the man who offered me the ride was probably too drunk to read them. Or perhaps he just wanted to have company for the long drive. I did not care. Driving inside the warm car was far better than standing outside in the cold.

It was the middle of the night, and I was pretty sleepy. I rehearsed the new English words I learned in the past months to stay awake. Sometimes, I opened the window and let the cold air hit my face. Jacques was sleeping peacefully, occasionally snorting and mumbling a few words in French.

The fuel gauge was fast approaching the empty mark. I pulled into a service station with a coffee shop beside it. I stopped carefully not to wake Jacques, but he opened his eyes. “Where are we?”

“About a hundred miles from Montreal.”

“Thanks for letting me rest. I’ll take over now,” he told me while paying for the gas. After having a piece of apple pie and coffee, he became a different person—alert and ready to drive. When we reached Montreal, he dropped me off where my sister and brother-in-law lived. They probably did not appreciate my waking them up early Sunday morning, but their friendly reception was heartfelt. I was glad to be there and immediately fell asleep on their sofa.

My vacation passed quickly. I tried without success to contact Pierrette. She no longer worked at the sports center. When I called her home, her father hung up without saying anything to me. I finally accepted that I would not see her again. I met with most of my other friends and told them about my experiences in America. Many were envious, and all wished me good luck for the rest of the school year.

After hearing about my hitchhiking adventures, my brother-in-law gave me a train ticket for Christmas. It was a welcome gift, and the long train ride allowed me to study for my semester finals—something I had neglected to do in Montreal.

After the finals, the advisor happily informed me that my grades—A in math, B in physics, and C in English—would entitle me to become a regular full-time student for the second semester. Unfortunately, they did not change my ineligibility for track. The coach told me I could work out with the team but could not compete at the meets. My only hope was to compete at the University of Chicago Track Club during the summer.

Several of my friends joined social fraternities. They had lots of fun, but I did not have time for that. Taking five additional semester units, working 20 hours per week for Mr. Harrington, and running track nearly daily kept me busy. By Easter, however, I had saved enough money to buy a car again.

Chicago students told me cars were much less expensive there than in Dubuque. During Easter vacation, with \$200 in my pocket, I took the train to the Windy City. After stopping at several used-car lots, I bought a 1954 Ford for \$200. The salesperson filled the gas tank and

assured me it would be enough to take me back to school. Most of the students lived in the dorms and did not have automobiles. Having one made me feel very important.

Buying a vehicle from an unknown used-car dealer turned out to be a very unwise decision. Within a month, my Ford needed a major repair, costing nearly as much as its purchase price. Another lesson learned the hard way!

My report card at the end of the second semester showed a B+ grade average for the school year. Scholastically, I had done well. On the other hand, my finances were not in such good shape. After paying for my school expenses and the car repair, I had about \$40 left. It would have been wise to stay and work a few weeks more for Mr. Harrington, but I was eager to return to track competition. Despite his kind offer, I was too proud to withdraw money from Fi's bank account. So, right after final exams in late May, I packed my suitcase, took my \$40, and drove to Chicago.

Summer in Chicago

After arriving in the city, my first task was to look for a job. The Gudeman Company, a large capacitor¹ manufacturer, advertised in the *Chicago Tribune* for technicians to fill various positions. After an interview, they hired me to supervise one of their final test departments. The job paid more than I had ever made, but exempt² personnel only received paychecks twice each month. I did not have enough money to survive for two weeks.

In a Chicago public telephone directory, I looked for typical Hungarian names (Nagy, Kovacs, Szabo, etc.). Calling them one by one, I asked if they knew someplace where I could stay immediately and pay in two weeks. The first two people could not help, but the third one knew a Hungarian woman who ran a boarding house on the north side of Chicago. I called the owner, and she was open to accepting a delayed payment. She invited me to visit her place.

The boarding house was about 80 blocks north of the Huron Street address of Gudeman. I drove up there on the busy Lakeshore Freeway. After hearing about my financial problem and seeing the job offer letter, the sympathetic owner agreed to take me in. She offered me a room shared with another boarder. Breakfast and dinner were included. I could pay her two weeks later after I received my first paycheck. Mission accomplished: in a strange city, on the first day, I had found work and a place to stay!

Mrs. Szabó introduced me to my boarding house roommate, another Iranian. In sharp contrast to Fi, Amin came from a poor family. His heavily accented English was even worse than mine. He told me how he struggled in his courses at a nearby college.

After a tasty dinner, I hit the bed, but Amin stayed up late to study. Following the Hungarian superstition³, I counted the corners of our room and went to sleep.

¹ Components that are widely used in electrical/electronic circuits for various functions, such as coupling, blocking, and filtering electrical signals.

² Salaried, instead of hourly paid employees.

³ My mother told me that if I counted the corners of a room where I was sleeping for the first time, any good dream I had that night would come true.

Knowing I would encounter heavy rush-hour traffic on the Lakeshore Freeway, I left for Gudeman early the following day. The manager I reported to led me to a large room in the basement and introduced me to the women who performed the various electrical tests. I was familiar with most of the test equipment, but I also had to write daily reports to management. The women had to punch a card at a clock when they came and left work. As a supervisor, I did not have to punch in and out.

Throughout most of the day, I sat at my desk in the corner of the room, learning about the required paperwork. Occasionally, when a technical problem came up, I helped the testers. If I could not figure something out, I asked for assistance from the supervisor of another test group. My job was not difficult, but the conditions in the room were unpleasant. As each day progressed, the temperature of the work area climbed into the 90s. The women wore light summer dresses, but the supervisors had to wear a white shirt and tie. I could hardly wait until the end of the workday to remove the tie and unbutton my collar.

After work, I drove to the University of Chicago campus track to meet the head coach, Ted Haydon. His track club had produced several U.S. Olympians, including Willye White, silver medalist of the women's long jump in 1956, and Ira Murchison, a member of 4x100-meter gold medal-winning relay and the co-holder of both the 100-meter and 100-yard world records.

In addition to being one of the U.S. Olympic coaches, Mr. Haydon was a wonderful human being. One of his "trademarks" was the long list of excuses he carried with him. The list included numerous statements, such as: "*Ate too much*", "*Not enough time to warm up*", "*Warmed up too much*", "*My starting block slipped*", "*I can't run on a muddy track*", "*Started my kick too soon*", "*Started my kick too late*", etc. When one of his athletes did not perform well, before they could say anything, Coach Haydon showed the list and asked the athlete to select the applicable excuse. In the rare case that an excuse was not on the list, he appended it.

Although I did not formally join the club, he allowed me to work out with the other athletes and compete under the "unattached" status. That did not bother me. I was glad to train under such a great man and be part of his distinguished group of athletes.

The athletic conference to which the University of Dubuque belonged did not have 440-yard hurdles; they only ran the 220-yard low and 120-yard-high hurdles. Even though I worked out with their team during the spring, I never had the opportunity to practice my main event.

The 440 hurdles usually cover one lap around the field. At the University of Chicago track, that race was run in a U-shape configuration—two straights with only one curve in between. I had trouble adjusting my running to that layout, but Mr. Hayden was not concerned. "It will be easier to run straight out of the blocks instead of facing the curve," he told me. "I want to see what you can do." He entered me in a meet that weekend, only a few days after I began to run at his track.

All of U. of C.'s track events were measured in metric distances, corresponding to the Olympic standards. In the race that weekend on their track, I ran in Lane 2 next to the club's best 400-meter hurdler. I began cautiously but still won, running my fastest time: 53.8 seconds. Mr. Hayden congratulated me and added, "By the end of the summer, you'll run even better." His praise made me feel great. After running an unexpected PR in my first race of the year, I looked forward to competing more that summer.

Ira Murchison impressed me the most of all the U. of C. runners. His powerful black body was not tall, but his arms and legs moved incredibly fast. His blinding speed right from the start of a running event earned him the name The Human Sputnik. He also had a great sense of humor. After seeing me in a race where I began too slowly, he told me, "Work on developing a suntan like mine. It'll help you have a much faster start."



Left: Murchison, the 5'5" Human Sputnik. Right: Runners are approaching the second of the ten hurdles in my first race of 1960. (I am second from the right.) Although, at that point, I was trailing the leader, I caught up with him halfway through and won the race.

On my way to the Lakeshore Parkway after a workout, I passed a movie theater and noticed *Porgy and Bess* playing there. During the week, several women at work talked about the great songs in the movie, so I decided to see it. After finding a place to park my car on the other side of the block, I took a shortcut through an alley to the theater, bought my ticket, and went inside.

The movie had already started. I sat in the last row of the dark auditorium. At first, I did not see anyone else inside. Once my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I realized the room was packed—with black people. Just as I had been on my first visit to Harlem in New York, I was in the minority. This time, it did not bother me. I loved the film. The cast was great, and the songs were wonderful. After the movie, I returned to my car through the dark alley, humming some of the melodies I had just heard.

Three large young black men stood halfway down the alley. They were smoking and chatting. As I approached them, they began walking toward me in a threatening manner. I quickly turned, ready to run from the danger, but saw two more men coming from that direction. I was trapped, and my heart started beating rapidly. I stepped beside the wooden fence with my back against it and hoped the men would pass by. They did not.

The five men formed a half-circle around me. I tried to look cool and smile, but my legs were shaking. All of them were big guys, and none returned my smile.

The one who seemed to be their leader began to talk. "We don't want to hurt you. Give us your wallet and your watch." The others laughed, probably noticing how scared I was.

I had no choice. My only possible defense—running away—was blocked. I removed my watch, pulled my wallet out, and handed it to the leader.

He rummaged through the wallet, took out all the money, and counted it. "Only thirty dollars," he announced to the group. He then threw the wallet at me. "You can keep the rest." After that, they ran away, heading toward my car.

Badly shaken, I went back to the theater. After hearing what happened to me, the ticket seller called the police. Within a few minutes, a patrol car with two burly police officers showed up. They asked me to sit in their car and describe the incident. Then, they drove around the neighborhood with me, but we could not find any perpetrators.

When they gave up, one of them asked, "Do you want to file a report at the station?"

I had had enough excitement for the day. "No thanks. Let me go home."

They drove me back to my car and gave me some parting advice. "Don't ever walk in this district after dark."

Their suggestion was not necessary. I had learned my lesson. After that day, I avoided even driving through it!

My first payday was six days away, and I was penniless. Fortunately, I had filled my car up with gas three days before. I could only hope the full tank would last me for another week. As for food, I ate as much as possible at breakfast and dinner in the boarding house and skipped lunch. My landlady was impressed by how much I enjoyed her cooking. I felt embarrassed about the holdup incident and kept it to myself.

Although my car did not have much fuel left by Friday, it did not let me down. After receiving my pay, the first trip was to a gas station. While the attendant took care of the car⁴, he told me the fuel tank was nearly empty. I do not know what would have happened if I had run out of gas on the parkway without a penny in my pocket. My old friend St. Anthony was watching over me again.

One evening after dinner, while we were watching television, Amin suddenly announced, "I have a terrible pain in my belly." When the trouble did not subside, the landlady suggested he visit the emergency room. He said he was afraid of doctors. I finally convinced him to go and then drove him to the ER. After an examination, the doctor diagnosed appendicitis and recommended surgery. The hospital admitted him immediately. I promised to come by to see how he was doing.

On my way out, I stopped by the nursing station and chatted with the nurse in charge. She was a pretty, petite young woman from the Philippines. Her name was Ludie. I asked if she would come to see a movie with me one day. She declined but invited me to a party that weekend. She shared an apartment with her two sisters, who were also nurses. I gladly accepted the invitation.

I found Amin in bed when I visited the following evening. The doctors had informed him that if he had not come the previous night, his appendix could have ruptured. He was very grateful to me for taking him to the hospital. I also saw Ludie again and looked forward to going to her party.

⁴ In those days, as soon as a car pulled up to a service station, the attendant not only filled up the fuel tank but also cleaned the windshield and checked the tire pressures, as well as the oil and water levels.

Sunday afternoon, I showed up at Ludie's apartment. She introduced me to her sisters and several of their friends. All the men were doctors, and I felt outclassed since I was only a first-year college student. However, in Ludie's eyes, I was equal because I came from Europe. We began to see each other regularly.

Sometime later, my coach came to practice holding a *Sports Illustrated* magazine. Pointing to the cover, he said, "Glenn Davis, the world record holder, will be here next month to run two events, only 20 minutes apart. He will run the 400-meter sprint first and then the 400-meter hurdles. Here is a chance for you to look good."

Of course, I had heard about Davis of Ohio State but had not seen him run. He had been untouchable in the 400-meter hurdles since winning the 1956 Olympics. He was also the unquestioned favorite in the event for the 1960 Games, only two months away.

I knew I would never have a chance to finish close to Davis, even after he had run another race a few minutes before. Still, the possibility of being in the same heat with an Olympic champion and world record holder appealed to me. "Yes, I would love to run in that meet," I replied. The coach promised to enter me.

Mr. Haydon was a great coach. Under his guidance, I trained the hardest my entire life, preparing myself for the big race. Two weeks later, I improved my time in the 400-meter hurdles by a second, running 52.7 seconds. Ludie came to see the meet and was very impressed by my hurdling. The big race was only two weeks away. I was ready, both physically and mentally.

An Unexpected Setback

Chicago's summer weather became hotter and more humid. The basement room where I worked had neither air conditioning nor access to fresh air. To make life more comfortable, we had two large electric fans that helped move the hot air around.

One afternoon, a woman complained about the air blowing into her face and asked me to move the fan. I stepped next to the fan, grabbed its base with my right hand, and tried to move it. The fan began to tip. Without thinking, I reached toward the top with my left hand to maintain balance.

I heard a strange noise and felt a sharp pain in my left hand. Some of the women screamed. When I looked at my hand, I saw blood running down my arm. I let go of the fan and brought my left hand closer to my face. My thumb had a gaping cut, and I could see the white bone inside.

Recalling my elementary school first-aid course, I grabbed my left upper arm tight with my right hand to apply pressure to the main artery. A supervisor in the adjacent room had heard the screams and rushed in to investigate. He immediately guided me to the plant's nursing station. The nurse quickly bandaged my hand and drove me to the nearest hospital. Within a few hours, they wheeled me into surgery.

I woke up with a heavily bandaged left hand. A nurse explained how lucky I had been that day. "A renowned hand surgeon was visiting our hospital when you came in," she explained. "Without his special skills, your badly damaged thumb would have been removed." She added

that the surgeon had inserted a long metal pin through my thumb into my hand. "In about two months, if the tendons hold, the pin will be removed."

Apparently, when I tried to move the fan, my left thumb had slipped through the loose wire screen cage, and the rotating blades had mangled it. To make matters worse, the blades of the old fan were covered with grime. In addition to the challenge of rebuilding the thumb, the physicians had to deal with the dirt in the wound. I received heavy dosages of antibiotics to prevent infection.

What will happen now? How will I pay for all the expenses? How could I run under such conditions? There might not be another chance to run against Glenn Davis. I was overwhelmed.

I called my landlady and explained what had happened. She was sorry to hear about my accident and told me she would not charge me for room and board while I was in the hospital. She was such a caring lady.

A man with a broad smile came into my hospital room and introduced himself as a Workmen's Compensation Insurance representative. I had not heard about that organization and suspected trouble.

"It was very careless of you to stick your thumb into that old fan," he scolded me. "It could have been much worse."

I agreed with him and tried to figure out why he had come to see me. Gradually, he got to the point. "Because the accident happened at work, we will cover your medical expenses. In addition, we'll pay your salary until you're fit to return to work."

After hearing this good news, I almost jumped out of bed and kissed the man.

"Please sign these papers to settle your case." He pulled several sheets out of his briefcase and handed me a pen. I gladly obliged. The man said goodbye and left.

Ludie visited me late in the evening. She had tried contacting me at the boarding house and learned what happened. After giving me lots of medical advice, she told me that her father had suddenly become very ill, and she was taking time off from work to see her father. "I'm flying to Manila tomorrow," she said. "Depending on my father's condition, I may not see you before the end of the summer." That was not good news, but she promised to stay in touch by mail. For several months, we corresponded by mail.

The next day, I began to explore the hospital by walking around the hallways, wearing my hospital gown. In a large sitting room, several patients watched the Democratic Convention on television. I sat next to a lady and learned about the candidates from her. Later, when she heard that my accident had taken place at work, she told me she had a lawyer friend who handled insurance cases. "He'll visit me tomorrow, and I'll introduce you to him. He could get you money for your injury," she said.

Her friend, Jason Roth, showed up the next day. "Have you signed any papers?" he asked me after I told him about the insurance man's visit.

"Yes, because he promised to pay my hospital expenses and salary."

"Well, that is still OK. I'll have to work harder. I'll take them to court, and they'll pay more."

He explained that usually, he handled clients on a 50-50 basis—he would keep half of any money awarded. My case, however, would require more work, so he wanted to keep two-

thirds of the settlement I'd receive on top of what had already been promised to me. If he lost the case, I owed him nothing.

It sounded like a good deal. I signed the papers he prepared. He asked me to contact his office after my release from the hospital.

Four days later, the doctors informed me that the antibiotics had worked, and my hand was healing without infection. They discharged me, and I returned to work the next day. My manager was happy to see me because he had had to fill in for me in my absence. The guilty fan had already been hauled away, but I found it in the warehouse. Looking at the grime covering the filthy blades, my respect for the doctors who had prevented an infection in my hand increased even more.

When I telephoned the lawyer, he came over for a consultation. "When doctors want you to exercise your thumb, don't do it!" he instructed me. "The stiffer your thumb is, the more money you'll receive from the court."

"Will my hand still be OK later?"

"Sure, don't worry."

Not knowing better, I foolishly followed his advice.

Several women from my department spent excessive time in the restroom. After coming to work in the morning, they punched the time clock and retreated to the bathroom, presumably to smoke and chat. Twenty to twenty-five minutes before the end of work, they reversed the procedure—disappearing into the restroom first and then coming back to punch their timecards a few minutes after the bell indicated the end of working hours. Despite my repeated warnings, they continued their annoying routine. Some offered excuses, such as "I have an upset stomach," "I have female problems," and "The previous supervisor didn't mind," but most of them just shrugged their shoulders in defiance.

Finally, my patience ran out. One afternoon, when they retired to the restroom 30 minutes before quitting time, I took their timecards and punched them out. Then, I sat at my desk and waited for their reaction.

A war erupted when they returned from the restroom and discovered what I had done. They screamed and yelled at me and wanted me to change the time on the cards. I refused. They ran to the union steward and filed a complaint. Not understanding the power of unions, I was not concerned.

A hearing followed the next day. Several women testified that I harassed them and demanded they work beyond their capabilities. Nobody took my side. The union demanded my transfer, claiming the women did not want to work under my supervision. Management caved in, not wanting a fight before an upcoming contract renewal. They transferred me to work with one of the production engineers. As it turned out, the new assignment allowed me to see the mass production of various capacitors in a fully automated environment. It was interesting and educational, so I appreciated their action. I also learned that picking a fight with a trade union was not wise.

The stainless steel rod still poked through my left thumb. Without the effective use of that thumb, I realized how important its function was. Even little things like tying my necktie or opening a car door were difficult. Following the lawyer's advice, I did not perform the doctor's

recommended exercises. I assumed I could begin doing those after the insurance claim was settled.

While I had trained at the University of Chicago Track Club, I noticed that most sprinters had powerfully built bodies instead of the traditionally slim build of runners. I learned that they worked out with weights under Coach Haydon's guidance. His success coaching runners inspired me to work with weights. I recalled that at Dubuque, the football players used the weight room, but our old-fashioned coach forbade the runners to touch weights.

How could I become stronger without violating our coach's rule? There was no way to use the school's weights behind his back. Buying heavy weights and using them in our small dorm room without anyone noticing was unrealistic. Then, one day, I came across a promising idea.

At lunchtime, I frequently walked to a nearby drugstore to read magazines. One of my favorites was published by the Joe Weider Muscleman organization; it contained success stories on how men developed a "Mr. America" physique. Among the various advertisements, I saw one aimed at runners—a jacket with 20 pockets and 20 small, flat one-pound weights. The ad described how runners could develop powerful legs by gradually sliding more and more weights into their pockets. The idea made sense to me. I ordered the jackets with the weights and planned to start adding them during the winter conditioning season.

I informed my manager in mid-August that I was returning to school in September. He was unhappy and reminded me I had asked for permanent employment in May, not a summer job. I told him that my accident had changed my plans. "I expect to have a significant insurance settlement soon," I explained. "It'll pay my way through another year of school." He accepted my reasoning and began to search for my replacement. At the end of the month, I left the Gudeman Company and returned to Dubuque.

My sophomore year

My first-year roommate, Fi, had transferred to a school in Chicago. Sophomore Bill Day, a promising young Canadian sprinter from Toronto, took his place. Bill had an easygoing personality, and we quickly became good friends.

Although Bill majored in physical education and biology, he had a keen sense of business. When he learned I could fix radios and record players, he proposed we form a business on campus. "I'll be your business manager and find defective products for you," he proposed. "You repair them, and we'll split the profit."

I asked my part-time employer if he approved of our campus-based enterprise. He did not object. "Go ahead, but don't put me out of business," he said with a smile. I bought hand tools, a soldering iron, a multimeter, and a toolbox from Allied Radio of Chicago. **Lebico** (a name derived from the first letters of "Leslie & Bill Company") began operations in September 1960. Bill mounted signs on the dormitory's bulletin boards to advertise, and our business took off. Thanks to the relatively short life of electron tubes, radios needed frequent repair, and our enterprise was quite profitable.

Other students frequently visited our room. Many used colorful language that bothered our ears, so we established "house rules" to curb swearing. We bought a piggy bank and posted a sign on our door listing fines for using foul language:

Accidental	1 cent
On purpose	5 cents
Shameful	10 cents
Sinful	25 cents

Although some of our visitors protested, they always paid. Eventually, the bank became a conversation piece around the dorm. We had enough money in it by the end of the school year to purchase letterman jackets for both of us.

Ever since the Hungarian Revolution, I had wanted to own a weapon for some unexplainable reason. One of the sports magazines advertised a wide range of guns, and I mail-ordered a 22-caliber revolver and ammunition. After it arrived, Bill and I began target practice through our dorm window. Our room on the third floor provided a great vantage point. We aimed at squirrels residing in a large tree about 25 yards away but never hit one.

The irate proctor of our building heard the blasts and came pounding on our door, demanding to know what we were doing. We tried to hide all the evidence, but the cloud of gun smoke still hung in the air when he entered. The proctor wanted to confiscate the gun, but finally, let me keep it after we promised never to use it again in our room. That incident ended our sharpshooting activities. As a token of our gratitude, we did not charge for repairing the radio he had brought us a few days earlier.

My sophomore courses were easier than the ones I had taken in my first year. Perhaps my improved language skills contributed to my studying better. I took calculus, chemistry, English, statics and dynamics, speech, and economics. During the fall semester, I ran cross-country and continued to play soccer. I still worked for Mr. Harrington and repaired students' radios on campus. I did not have any social life.

In the 1950s, the traditional haircut among young college men was the crewcut. My teammates constantly teased me about my long hair. Eventually, I gave in and let the barber make me look like the rest of the team. I sent a photo to my mother, and she was horrified to see me with a one-inch flat top. Gradually, I let it grow longer, and by the end of the school year, my hair returned to its regular length.

Watching the televised 1960 presidential debate between John Kennedy and Richard Nixon was a new experience for all American viewers, particularly for me. In Hungary, during the Communist control, the Kremlin decided who would govern our country. Our "elections" were only formalities, so I looked forward to seeing how they were handled in the United States.

Kennedy's optimistic demeanor left a deep impression on me. He also looked better than Nixon. If I had been an American citizen, Kennedy would have had my vote. When he was elected later that year, I was glad I had supported him.

In late October, a doctor in Chicago removed the steel rod from my left thumb. I did not have to wear the protective bandage after that. But my thumb was stiff, and I was unable to bend it. The doctor submitted a report to the court. Shortly after, I received a letter from Mr. Roth, my lawyer, asking me to appear for a hearing in Chicago.

The big city courthouse was close to the station, so I took the train to the hearing. The setting was entirely new to me. I sat at a small table with my lawyer on the left side of the room. The three insurance lawyers representing Workmen's Comp sat at another table on

the right side. After the judge heard arguments from both sides, he examined my hand. Shortly after, he announced the judgment; "Plaintiff shall receive \$1,000 in addition to what Workmen's Comp has already paid."

I was excited to hear the good news. One-third of a thousand dollars represented a large sum to me. My lawyer began to thank the judge for reaching such a just compensation, but the judge interrupted him. "Mr. Roth, what percentage of the money will go to you?"

"Well, Your Honor, this was a difficult case because Mr. Besser had already agreed to settle for only medical expenses and lost wages," he began. "Workmen's Comp took advantage of his inexperience by not telling him what he should receive for his disability."

"How much of the \$1,000 do you keep?" the judge interrupted him again.

"He receives one-third, and I keep two-thirds for all my work."

"Mr. Roth, I feel you are also taking advantage of Mr. Besser's inexperience," said the judge disapprovingly. "I think the split should be in his favor. After all, he is the one suffering a lifetime disability. Don't you agree?"

I walked away with a check for \$666.67! Except for the inflationary days in Hungary, when it took trillions of *pengő*s to buy a loaf of bread, this was the largest sum I had ever possessed. Feeling rich, I immediately decided to fly to Montreal for a Christmas vacation. *Not only will I fly there, but I'll buy my sister the kitchen mixer she always dreamt of having.* Her husband, Tibor, had a thrifty nature and did not want to spend money on what he considered unnecessary. I knew she would enjoy having a mixer. I cashed the check after returning to Dubuque and hid the money in the bottom of my toolbox.

College soccer and cross-country seasons ended in November. Our teams won conference championships in both sports. I was happy that I did not have to run the two-mile races anymore, but I missed playing soccer. After taking a two-week rest, I began the conditioning workouts for the 1961 track season. Dubuque did not have an indoor track, so we continued running outdoors. The climate in the Midwest was not as severe as the Montreal winters. I had no trouble running on the snow-covered roads.

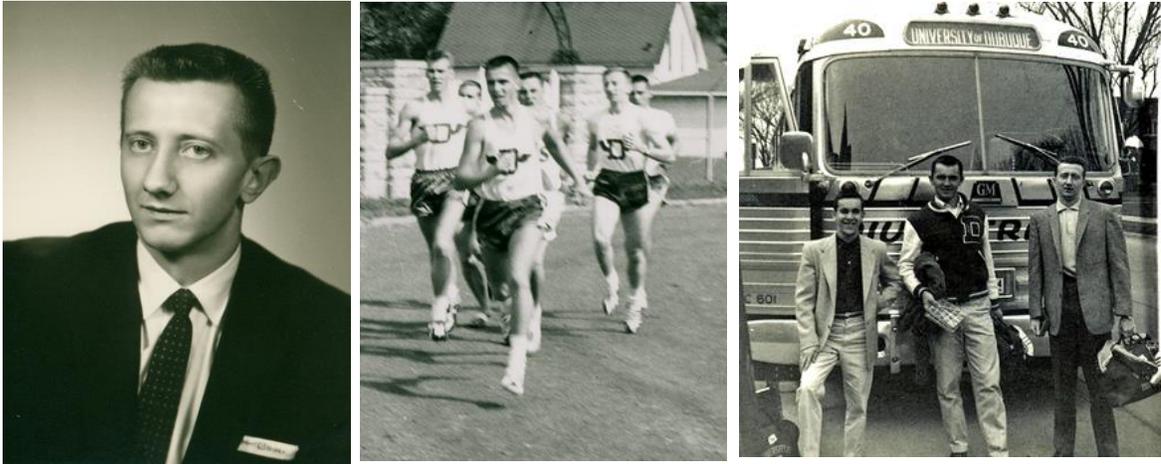
Dubuque's athletic conference did not include my specialty, the 440-yard hurdles. The coach wanted me to compete in the 120-yard and 220-yard hurdles, the 440-yard dash, and the 4 x 440-yard relay. I lacked the speed of a true sprinter, so I had no hope of excelling in the shorter hurdle events. My best chance was to compete against the quarter-milers.

My roommate Bill Day was a sprinter but planned to move up to up the 440-yard race. I did not like the idea at all. If he succeeded in developing his endurance, I would have no chance against his superior speed. However, I had a secret weapon—my weight jacket! I slipped an additional pound of weight into my jacket every second day. Of course, I told Bill about it, but he did not think much of my crazy idea. The two of us followed the same workout routine during the conditioning sessions, except for the extra weight I carried.

I showed my injured thumb to a doctor in Montreal during Christmas vacation. He was astonished to hear that I had followed the lawyer's advice instead of having physiotherapy. "There isn't anything you can do now," he told me. "The money you've received was not worth having a stiff thumb for the rest of your life." I wished I had acted differently, but it was too late. Another lesson learned the hard way.

The indoor track season arrived, and our team's first dual meet was against Coe College in Cedar Rapids. Both my roommate and I were to run the 440-yard race. By then, I carried the full 20 pounds of extra weight during our workouts and ensured Bill knew it daily.

Bill and I warmed up together before the race. I repeatedly told him how great it felt to run without the weights. He looked worried at the start, and he already appeared psychologically defeated. I won the race and set a new track record at Coe. Bill threw up after the finish and was utterly disgusted. "I'll never run another 440 in my life," he told me. His loss did not affect our friendship or business relationship, and I had one less competitor to worry about for the rest of the track season. Buying the weight jacket turned out to be a good investment!



Left: The 1960 yearbook photo shows my crewcut. Center: Our cross-country team leaves the track towards the fields at the beginning of a two-mile race. Right: Traveling with the team to a track meet.

I was as busy during the second semester as in the first. Scholastically, my sophomore grades improved from the first year; I earned A's and B's in all my courses. At the conference track and field championship, I made the finals in both short hurdle races (110y & 220y) and ran on the winning 4 x 440-yard relay team that set a new school record. Our team also won the overall conference championship.

Altogether, it was a good year for me, apart from being unable to run my best event—the 440-yard hurdles, where my previous experience would have been beneficial. Until the late 1960s, the track programs, even at the large universities, included only the 330-yard hurdles—instead of the full 440-yard event. The smaller schools' programs generally only included the 120-yard high and 220-yard low hurdle events, which heavily relied on speed instead of speed endurance. With hindsight, I should have selected a college where I could have been more of a "star athlete"!

One of my former Dubuque track teammates, a friend from Canada named Blair Bowling, also wanted to pursue engineering. After completing the two-year pre-engineering program, he transferred to the University of Colorado (CU) for his BSEE degree. He also continued running. I saw him in Montreal during Christmas vacation, and he told me what a great place Boulder was. Just as he had inspired me to attend the University of Dubuque earlier, he convinced me to finish my schooling at CU.



The University of Dubuque's school record-setting conference champion 4x440-yard relay team (I am the first from the right).

Before continuing college, however, I wanted to obtain Canadian citizenship. It would require two more years of Canadian residency. Facing two more frigid winters and trying to speak French in Montreal did not appeal to me. My roommate, Bill, suggested living in Toronto instead. Not only was Toronto, Bill's hometown, English-speaking and slightly more temperate, but it was also more industrialized than Montreal. "You'll find a good job there quickly," he told me. I agreed to drive there with him.

Eva was unhappy when I wrote about my plan to live 300 miles southwest of them. During the transition to our new lives away from Hungary, the closeness in Montreal gave us great comfort. Sharing meals and time maintained the relationship we had known growing up. Still, I decided to spend the two years in Toronto and promised Eva I would visit frequently. After receiving my citizenship, I planned to transfer to CU and finish my engineering studies.