

How I made my dreams come true!

"Dream big" and "Make it happen"

By Ed Collier

This is the story of my working career:

When I was very young I learned from my father what the term "*work ethic*" meant. I learned that to get the life I wanted I just needed to focus on my dream, work hard and make it happen. And If I did this correctly I could have anything I wanted. I could do this; *I knew what I wanted my life to be!*



My first job as a child was doing things around the house like taking out the trash and helping with the dishes. These small jobs helped me earn a small allowance each week and allowed me to



contribute to my share of the family chores. I used these earnings to buy things I wanted like model airplane and

model train kits and pocket knives. But as I got older I wanted more expensive things.

When I was about twelve years old I learned of a small paper route that my neighbor was selling and I gathered up the \$15 needed to buy it. This was the first job in my *fifty six year* work career. The paper route was about 6-8 blocks long and included the street we lived on. It was a Saturday night only route and came with a wooden pull cart with steel wheels. I would pull the cart to an intersection of Page



Ave and Pennsylvania Ave in Pagedale Mo. a couple of blocks from home. This is where the papers for this route would be dropped off.

I would load the papers into my cart and deliver them to all of the houses on my customer list, then once a month I would collect payment.

I made a few cents a paper for each paper sold, plus tips.

I started an "old coin" collection while I sold papers because there were still lots of these in circulation then, and I still have that collection. At thirteen I had stashed



enough of my earnings in a Band-Aid can to buy myself a brand new Schwinn three-speed Traveler bike for about \$67. I was doing well.



With this new transportation to get me around better, I decided to buy another daily route and a daily paper corner to expand my business. Every day when I got out of grade school I would ride my new bike a couple of blocks to my job selling papers. When I was fifteen and sixteen I also worked some part time jobs in bowling alleys to make a little more money.

When I turned sixteen I got a car for my birthday, and the same neighbor that sold me the paper route was quitting his job at a grocery store to go off to college. And now I had an old car that I wanted to fix up creating a need for more money.

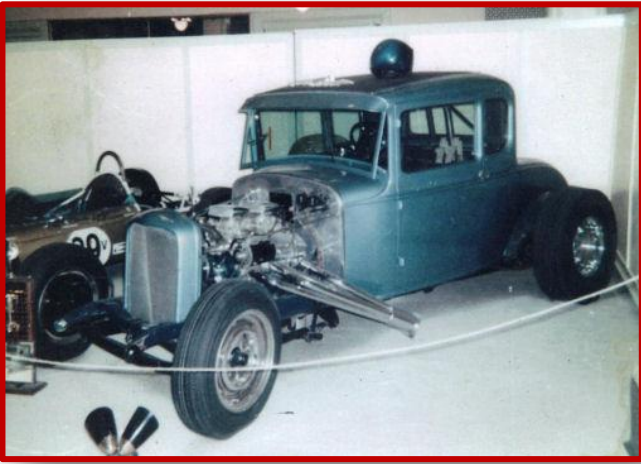


I immediately went to the store and got his job, beginning as a bagger and quickly moving up to a job as a checker. I worked this job through high school and Trade School, *paying my own tuition while going to Trade School.*

This was all possible through the *work ethic* and independence that my father had taught me.

These qualities helped me become a self sufficient adult. My parents prepared me well to live the life of my dreams.

During this car period of my life *I dreamed of building a hot rod*. I took some of my savings and bought a 1931 Ford from a friend for seventy five dollars and began to make it happen.



While working on this car during high school and Trade School I learned how to do many new things.

After high school I felt that I was not ready for college and had chosen to go to Ranken Trade School instead. After graduating from Trade School at the top of my class, a job recruiter from McDonnell Aircraft Company came to

the school looking for the top Mechanical Drafting students to be Technical Illustrators, and I was the first to get hired.

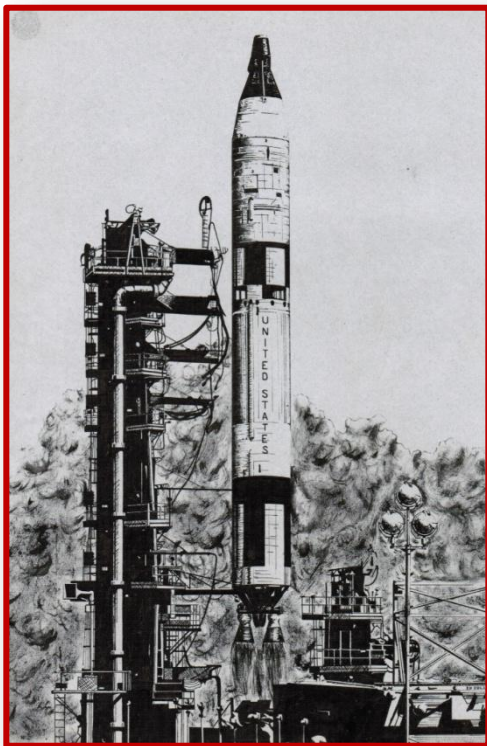


With this better job, I could now get to the next phase of my working life and begin driving the real *car of my dreams*, a 1958 Austin Healey sports car.

I told dad what I was looking for and he helped me find this car. I put up \$500 of my savings and he loaned me the rest. I paid off this loan at \$75 per month for twelve

months. I could now also buy nice clothes, and have more money for dates etc. Life was good. Things were getting better with each step up in my career.

I soon fell in love (*a major dream fulfilled*), started a wonderful family and was off on my life's journey creating an even greater need to succeed. I immediately signed up and started attending night school at Washington University taking courses that would help me advance in my current job, and would eventually lead to a Bachelor's degree opening the doors to even higher salaries. I continued taking courses to help in my career and also continued seeking part time freelance jobs. I knew how to make money and care for my family, and knew that if I kept this up my life would continue to improve. I always strived to learn as many new things as I could and would try to be a little "healthier, wealthier, and wiser" every day.



After creating illustrations for aircraft assembly manuals in downtown St Louis for two years, because of my ambition and advanced skills, my boss gave me an opportunity to transfer to the Space Complex at the St Louis Airport where the *Gemini space craft* was being built. This was quite a break. I was doing much more exciting work among the engineers, astronauts and spacecraft assembly workers, and was much closer to our home in St Peters.

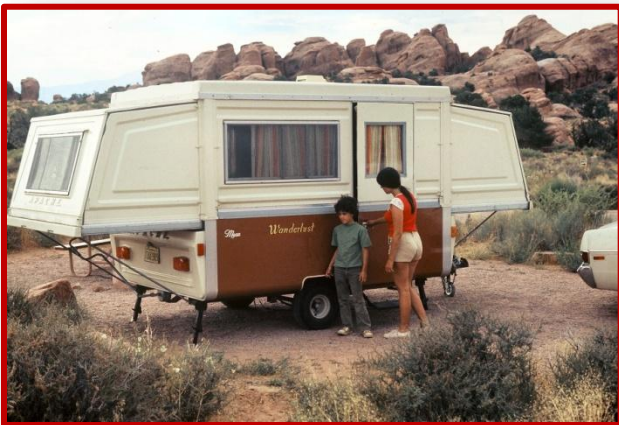
I continued advancing my career and salary by changing jobs every few years, and taking more college courses. I also continued working freelance projects where I could find them doing things I enjoyed. This extra money funded some really nice vacations each year.

I got interested in cameras in my early twenties. This is when I realized that I could also have other things I enjoyed if I could find a way to make money with them. I could have almost anything I wanted if those things would pay for themselves.

My father, who built both homes that I grew up in, learned how to all of the things he wanted to do by going to the library and reading how-to books. (Think Utube) We lived in a very nice house he built that cost him much less than if he would have just bought a new one. He taught me how to build things and fix things. I saved a lot of money my entire life with all of these valuable skills.

After learning a great deal about photography from friends and reading lots of books, I took up freelance photography as a way to support this hobby. Photography later became another part time job and another example of having things I wanted through learning new skills and hard work.

In 1971 I had dream to spend even more time vacationing with my family. One day I came up with the idea of quitting my job, taking the entire summer off and traveling around the country camping with Nancy, Eddie, and Mike. We loved to travel as a family and I could only get two weeks off in the summer.



One summer I got permission to take the two weeks paid plus one without pay to spend three weeks in Florida. Two weeks were not enough and Eddie and Mike were growing up so fast I wanted to spend more time with them before they were out on their own chasing their dreams.

It took a year to plan this trip. I also came up with the idea of writing magazine articles to make money while we traveled, so I began reading books about article writing. Then I began writing articles and selling them. By getting Nancy a job at

McDonnell Aircraft as a Product Support publications artist, we saved up enough to make this dream trip happen.

We took off on a ten thousand mile summer long trip going as far South East as the US Virgin Islands and as far Northwest as Seattle Washington and back across much of the Western US. But, by the time we returned from the trip I had discovered that I could make much more money as an Illustrator than writing freelance magazine articles. I did however continue working in photography as a part time wedding photographer making money to help out on more family trips.

After this trip I took a contract assignment in Iowa and worked there for the next nine months. I liked this idea because Davenport Iowa was a smaller city than St Louis, and would be a better place to raise children than in the big city. Contract work paid much more than a large company job, but did not have the same important benefits.

After the Iowa job ended, we took the next summer off and traveled all around Florida looking for contract or full time work there. But the salaries there were much to low and at the end of the summer, after returning home, I worked a short time as a self employed sign painter and did other odd jobs to earn money while looking for employment in another nice smaller town.

In the fall of that year I landed a good contract job in Amarillo Texas working as an Illustrator for Bell Helicopter. I liked this idea because it was a great smaller city and a good place to raise a family. This was a good move for us. This two month contract was extended to a few more months, leading to an offer for a full time position and more upward opportunities.

While working at Bell, I continued seeking part time freelance commercial art work for companies around Amarillo, and continued making progress furthering my college education.

Within two years I advanced from an Illustrator to a Manufacturing Engineer. Around 1982 the Personal Computer came out and I was given the chance to learn

this exciting new business tool, an opportunity that paid big dividends. I fell in love with this technology and began learning all I could about computers. I became a local expert in my department.

I continued widening my photography skills by taking college courses at Amarillo Junior College and expanded my job duties to include a position as a part time plant photographer for Bell. After a year or so at this position I transferred from Engineering to Public Relations and began working as a Professional Photographer and Photojournalist writing and publishing the company newsletter. During this



time I took *all* of the photography courses Amarillo College offered and some journalist courses at WTA&M University. I had a lot of fun in this career flying in helicopters taking Aerial photos and thousands of other photos around the plant. I also managed my own dark room. After a couple of years of this I was promoted to Public

Relations Representative for Bell Amarillo Textron.

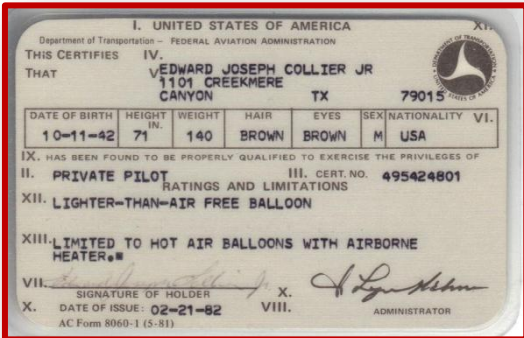
Somewhere in this time period I realized *another dream* when I found out that someone in Amarillo had a hot air balloon, something I had been interested for



several years. I soon met Ken Kelly and Buzz Wills who worked at the Kelly Company. This company transported all of the Helium from Amarillo, the main source of the world's Helium to locations around the world. It just happens that Helium is what is used to fill lighter-than-air gas balloons; and Ed Yost, the father of the modern day hot air balloon, and who manufactures commercial gas balloons trains his gas balloon

pilots in Amarillo. Ken Kelly, son of the owner of Kelly Helium purchased a hot air balloon from Ed and flew it around Amarillo.

I joined this small Amarillo group of balloonist and helped develop a Hot Air Balloon club in Amarillo to promote the sport. Buzz Wills went on to become a Hot Air Balloon Instructor and a Pilot Designee that could issue pilots licenses to his students.



I loved the sport, but did not want to own a balloon because of the cost vs. time used. I became a student and when I received my pilot's license, I began flying the balloons of other students that had not yet earned their license. I could now balloon without spending much money.



Along in this same period I also dreamed of building a kit car with Eddie and Mike. We built this beautiful fiberglass 1952 MGB Replica in less than a year. Another dream fulfilled!

By 1984 I completed a two year Associates of Science degree at Amarillo College, and a four year degree at West Texas State University, this was another step to a better life. I told mom that



she and dad were very good influences on my life. And by this time Eddie and Mike were off on their own chasing their dreams.

After our sons began their own lives Nancy and I realized that we had developed different ambitions and interest in life, and divorced to start our own new lives. Nancy went to St Louis, Missouri where she met and married a very good man named Ron Sass, and they began sharing their common dreams. I stayed in Amarillo, and later married Christy and began living our dreams of adventure and travel together.

After the Bell Amarillo Overhaul and Modification facility closed in 1989 I was offered a job as a computer support specialist at Pantex a Department of Energy weapons facility in Amarillo. I worked there for one year developing my computer skills through self study and more college courses. When this job ended I had an opportunity to become self employed as a database programmer writing code and developing business solutions for some of the companies in Amarillo.



I started a company called "*Micro Computer Solutions*" and my first client was American Pipeline a large Texas - New Mexico gas Pipeline Company with its main office in Amarillo. My job was to put all of their business data into relational databases beginning in the front office

and going through their entire company and field operations end-to-end.

After getting their data into menu driven application databases, I developed all of the reports needed to run their business more efficiently. Some of the reports I created included analytical audit algorithms that resulted in millions of dollars in savings.

I loved the constant self learning required in programming and I loved the satisfaction of creating a program from code that provided data solutions for businesses.

After several years of writing programs the need for this type of work fell off in Amarillo and I got an offer to begin teaching computer courses as a part time instructor at Amarillo College. This job was a supplement for my business and I continued doing both for several more years.

A few years while I was programming and teaching the Internet became available for commercial use. And soon after that, the World Wide Web began evolving. With my lifetime of searching for knowledge and information in libraries and elsewhere, the World Wide Web was like heaven to me. Where was this when I was young?

So now in addition to teaching computer operating systems and business applications I began teaching students how to use the World Web. I began learning to create web pages and web sites for businesses, and when the concept of on-line auction eBay came along, I was hooked on starting my own mail-order business to fill some more of my time.

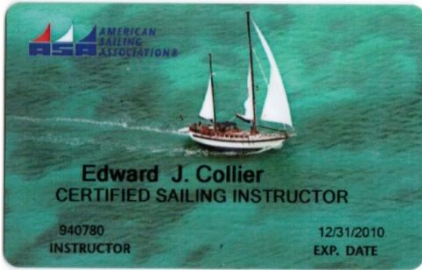


Somewhere along this time I turned fifty and was very interested in sailing. Christy convinced me to *reach for that dream* and go take sailing lessons. So we went to Steve Colgate Sailing School on Captiva Island near Ft Meyer Florida and I learned to sail big sailing yachts. My life with Christy has been a *continual list of life changing dreams*.

After returning to Texas from the lessons in Florida, I learned of another sailing school on Lake Texoma, near Dallas, called American Sailing Association. ASA was larger and more widely recognized in the US and around the world than the Colgate school so I checked it out. I took their courses and continued taking them until I was a certified ASA Sailing Instructor and could make money while having fun teaching sailing.

"There is no better way to learn than to become a teacher." When I taught sailing I would learn more each time I held a class, when I taught computer classes I learned much more after each class.

Teaching Sailing was yet another part time job, having fun doing something I love and getting paid for it, just like photography, and computers.



I began working as a part time sailing instructor at Granpappy Marina, and Cedar Mills marina on Lake Texoma, and taught some classes in the British Islands, and Saint Martin in the Caribbean. *This was the most fun I ever had making money.*

As I continued the *Micro Computer Solutions* business working on American Pipeline systems, I also created a database application to manage all of the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) retirement plan data; I taught computer courses at the Amarillo College, managed Web Sites for the city of Amarillo Department of Tourism and built and managed many other commercial sites. I also sold products on eBay, and through an on-line mail order Web business called www.TheWorldsTreasure.com.



All of this was working very well until Bell Helicopter decided to build a new plant in Amarillo to assemble a type of aircraft never before produced. They contacted me to come to work for them with my Manufacturing Engineering background, and my computer expertise, to help them convert all of their production

manufacturing plans currently in old legacy main frame computers with slow single line editors into a much more efficient modern relational database system.

This was another dream job, to be part of making history with the creation of a never flown type of aircraft, steady work, lots of big company benefits, another retirement plan, vacations, holidays etc. I began making the transition out of self employment, doing some of my old work part time as I quickly phased out these projects. Wow, life was really good again.

Starting Bell as a Manufacturing Engineer, I was soon transferred into the Information Technology Department. Here I worked with Cimx, a software vendor from Cincinnati with the task of taking their off-the-shelf relational database application and modeling it to conform to the Bell data structures, pull all of the Legacy IBM main frame data out, and convert it into the a new relational database system. Working with the vendor I was responsible for the user front end modeling and data conversion. This work was completed within one year, and Bell successfully began building ships using the paper instructions from this much more efficient system for two more years.

With that transformation completed Bell decided to go one step further removing the paper delivering the instructions and build records directly to computers on the shop floor at the work stands. This next transition would require another off-the-shelf Manufacturing Execution System from Intercim a company located in Minneapolis Minnesota, to satisfy this need.

I worked as Project Manager with a team on this new project for several more years to help it get off the ground. This new paperless system was used in production successfully for several years. In an effort to consolidate all of the computer technology Bell's parent company Textron decided to change the entire computer infrastructure into one companywide integrated system. My last year of work before my 2012 retirement was spent as a Subject Matter Expert helping to develop this new transition.

To sum up: By the time I retired, I had chased my lifelong dreams and had most everything in life that I dreamed of. It was all made possible from starting early with a vision, and working toward that vision throughout my life. I learned from my father's examples to live within my means and that combined with twenty five years working for a large companies with lots of benefits and a pension we have lived a comfortable life. Christy retired at fifty seven and we continued to fulfill our dreams of adventure.

To: Eddie and Rita, Michael and Kimber, Ryan, Bailey, Stone and Michaya - this is how I did it.

The point of me writing this story to you: I never knew much about my dad's working life other than knowing that he worked hard making an honest living. He managed his time and money well, and lived the life that he dreamed of. But I never really knew many of the details of his full life and careers, so I wrote this paper to pass on the story of my journey of successes, changes and failures, through my fifty six working years. ***This is my working Legacy.***

This story is how I got to where I am, and how I acquired the resources to support my family in a way that provided them with a good life, how I acquired a broad education, practiced good work ethic, and gained worldly knowledge.

I encourage everyone to never stop learning all that you can. This will help enable your independence, self reliance, and provide opportunities for you to realize all of your life's dreams.

"Make BIG Dreams, keep focused and make them happen!"