

MERCHANTS of DECEPTION

*An insider's
look at the
worldwide,
systematic
conspiracy
of lies that is
Amway / Quixtar
and their
motivational
organizations*

Eric Scheibeler

IN GOD WE TRUST



MERCHANTS of DECEPTION

Eric Scheibeler

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People's Perceptions of . . .

Merchants of Deception

“Mr. Scheibeler’s book is a chilling portrayal of the process by which intelligent people can persist for years in pursuing the Amway dream while making no money. It is all the more significant because he earned his way to one of the highest distributor levels in the Company. He understands the subtle methods used to keep distributors reaching for the brass ring even in the face of dismal earnings and how they are prevented from learning from each other that many, if not most, are in the same boat.

Scheibeler describes the mental conditioning that diminished his ability to make critical judgments in the face of overwhelming factual evidence and his guilt about not attending meetings even after he had decided to leave the company. I learned of similar experiences from ex-distributors when I interviewed them for the State of Wisconsin’s Amway litigation in the early 80’s. Such conditioning may explain why the tax returns (obtained for this litigation) of all active Wisconsin Direct Distributors, the company’s top 1%, showed an average net income of minus \$900. Why did these men and women persist in earning their way to Direct Distributor status under these economic circumstances? Eric Scheibeler’s book answers this question for those whose minds are clear enough to read its pages.”

- **BRUCE A. CRAIG, retired Assistant Attorney General,
Wisconsin Department of Justice - Office of Consumer Protection**

(This statement is my own and not that of the State of Wisconsin)

“They have diamonds, limousines and mansions. Eric Scheibeler has a book. With cash contributions to politicians they seek to influence regulatory agencies, state laws and national trade policies. In telling his story, Eric Scheibeler asks for legality, honesty and full disclosure. They pay ex-presidents of the United States, famous televangelists and motivation speakers to prop up their image. Eric Scheibeler stands on his own and speaks for himself. And they have a raucous army of followers, clingers and defenders who sing and shout their praise. Eric Scheibeler gives voice to millions more who are silenced by deception, manipulation, fear and shame. With such odds arrayed, Amway and its related motivational organizations are no match for the thunderous truth of Eric Scheibeler’s exposé.”

- **ROBERT L. FITZPATRICK**
*Author of False Profits: Seeking Financial and Spiritual Deliverance in
Multi-Level Marketing and Pyramid Schemes*
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“Eric Scheibeler’s new book *Merchants of Deception* is a must read! It reveals the inner workings of one of the largest privately held companies in the world, whose distributor force has used deceit and mind control techniques to ensnare millions of people around the world. Cult mind control techniques are not only used in religious groups — they have entered the world of business — and everyone must become aware of it, or risk the consequences. Eric Scheibeler has shown in this book how intelligent, educated mainstream citizens can be seduced and controlled. After his years of committed leadership with Amway, he experienced most of the characteristic psychological problems people have after walking away from a cult. As a licensed mental health counselor, I can say that I am convinced that there is a cult mind control problem with the Amway Motivational Organization’s system. I have been counseling people with cult mind control problems for over twenty years, and Eric Scheibeler’s problems fit the classic profile. I am so pleased to see that he has worked hard on his recovery and that he is so dedicated to share his experience and knowledge. He is courageous and I heartily applaud the release of this important new book.”

- **STEVEN HASSAN, M. ED., LMHC**
President, Freedom of Mind Resource Center
(www.freedomofmind.com)
Author of *Releasing the Bonds: Empowering People to Think for Themselves and Combatting Cult Mind Control*

“Misconceptions abound about people who join groups — but Amway? Why, this group is main stream, these are people just like us — wanting a better life, sacrificing family-time to make just a little more money. From Jonestown to Heaven’s Gate we have found comfort in believing, ‘Those folks are a bunch of nuts— Thank God I’m not like them!’

Eric Scheibeler’s chilling portrayal of life inside a professed money making machine will convince anyone who ever said, ‘That could never happen to me,’ to think again — It can happen to the best of us.”

- **DEBORAH LAYTON**
Author of *Seductive Poison, A Jonestown Survivor’s Story of Life and Death in the Peoples Temple*

“Eric Scheibeler was an Emerald in the Amway business, well on his way to Diamond. In *Merchants of Deception*, he has drawn a brutally honest picture of high-level achievement in a large Amway Motivational Organization (AMO). He describes vividly:

- ∞ the poverty-level lifestyle he lived as a ‘successful’ Emerald
- ∞ his gradual descent into mindless loyalty and obedience to the all-powerful upline

- ∞ the enormous inconsistencies between the promises and the reality
- ∞ the demands on him and his organization to pour money into the system that was secretly making their ‘leader’ wealthy beyond the bounds of avarice
- ∞ his huge financial, spiritual, and relationship losses, and those of the people in his group
- ∞ and the nightmare of emerging from the deceptions and mind control.

After working as many as 100 hours or more per week for nearly ten years in his quest for a lifestyle of freedom to enjoy his family, and achieving a level that fewer than 1/10th of 1% of all distributors ever achieve, Scheibeler’s life began to unravel. Desperately clinging to the hope that what he wanted to believe about ‘The Business’ and ‘the upline’ was true, in the face of mounting evidence of lies and deceit, Scheibeler suffered through months where he was nearly catatonic as the internal and external battles raged. Through the black pall of deep depression, enormous financial losses — including bankruptcy and imminent home foreclosure — through the demoralizing realization that the 100+ hours of work per week he had poured into ‘The Business’ had only served to take him away from what was important to him, and through a serious death threat, Scheibeler emerges victorious.

Is he wealthy? Not by a long shot. It will take years to overcome the financial and emotional depredations of the fraud he was lured into. But he has his self-respect, his sanity, his faith and his family back.

While there have been other books which exposed the AMO’s deceptions and lies, and discussed the cultic mind-control techniques used to entice prospects and keep them pouring money into their uplines’ pockets, none has the raw, emotional power of this personal account of one man’s descent into the AMO hell and back again.”

– **RUTH CARTER**

Author of Amway Motivational Organizations: Behind the Smoke and Mirrors

“After 4 years of ‘business building’ and not even making 2500 in volume, our family was breaking apart and we were near bankruptcy when I said I’d had enough. Our children were suffering while we put their needs on hold until we ‘got free.’ A few months after I quit the Amway business my wife filed for divorce because I had suddenly become a ‘dream stealer’ and a ‘loser.’ This book chronicles exactly how the Amway Motivational Organizations expertly use psychological, emotional and financial deception to, at all costs, increase their secretive income source. My family and finances are but one of the many casualties. This book is a gripping, well-documented white knuckle express to the darkest depths of deception and betrayal.”

– **ASHLEY WILKES, Photographer/Filmmaker**

“Merchants of Deception by Eric Scheibeler is the engrossing account of the author’s recruitment into a cult, his rapid advancement as a recruiter of others, his awakening after many years of mind-dulling dedication to the cult ideology, his disconnection and deepening disillusionment, and his progressively strengthening personal resolve that what happened to him will not happen to others. The author could have entered into an easy and lucrative settlement with the cult gatekeeper (Amway) that would have sealed his lips and sealed the fate of many, many others. But he didn’t. The resulting book is a modern story of awakening to the existence of an elaborate evil, and searching for one’s own redemption.

The untimely and mysterious death of my son was the beginning of my own discovery of the evil that cults perpetrate. The story of Noah’s death in Time: ‘Scientology, the Cult of Greed,’ May 6, 1991, and Readers Digest: ‘A Dangerous Cult Goes Mainstream,’ October 1991, resulted in an extensive public awakening. Americans, however, still have a great deal to learn about the manipulative and destructive organizations that riddle and subvert our society. Eric Scheibeler’s book is an important testimony and will help make the world a better and safer place as it advances each reader’s understanding.”

– EDWARD A. LOTTICK, M.D.

“In *Merchants of Deception*, Eric Scheibeler does a chilling study of how a destructive cult can subtly, yet completely, take over one’s life and reshape one’s thoughts however the leadership of the cult wishes. Though I was never a member of the Amway Motivational Organizations, I was a member of a destructive cult for six years, and all of the exploitations that Eric describes in Amway’s MO also apply to me. The financial exploitation, the powerlessness before the leadership, the reforming of one’s thoughts so that the group and its goals became the focus of one’s life — all were present in my experience, and the experiences of thousands of people who have had their lives taken up by one of these destructive groups. Eric goes through very explicitly how anyone, given the right circumstances, can be taken in, and I highly recommend his book for those interested not only in the practices of Amway’s Motivational Organizations, but in those of all destructive cults and who want to learn how to protect themselves and their loved ones.”

– NICK DICIACCIO

“As a mental health professional who works with people in cults and an ex-cult member myself (6 years in Scientology), I have to say that Eric Scheibeler has done a masterful job at illustrating, in this compelling book, how certain business groups can have the very same cultic dynamics as the more well-known religious cults. This book is a page-turner. Eric Scheibeler tells the story of his experience within the Amway ranks, from

his earliest recruitment, to his decision to leave the organization and the emotionally and financially devastating aftermath. This is an account I have heard many times before from ex-cult members. This could have just as easily been the story of any ex-member of any well-known cult, since the dynamics were the same. In the organization I was a member of, there was information that people were not told about, until they were both very emotionally and financially committed to the group.

Controversial information was given only very gradually and people were told acceptable truths. Had I known this information from the start, I never would have gotten involved. The same holds true for Eric Scheibeler's experience within the Amway Motivational Organization. In my group, we were encouraged to perfectly 'duplicate' the material that came from our leader. No creativity or originality was allowed. Ditto for the Amway group, who even used the exact same term that we did (duplication). People who left the organization were considered to be miserable, degraded losers who had committed crimes against the group. Members were made to fear leaving the group, which was seen, in our distorted, indoctrinated state of mind, to be tantamount to complete personal destruction. Once again, we see this pattern throughout Eric Scheibeler's experience. The aftermath of the emotional traumatization ex-cult members go through after leaving is also the same. If anyone thinks that cults have to necessarily be religious in nature, they need to read this book, which solidly proves otherwise. I highly recommend that anyone whose life has been touched by the cultic experience read this book, whether it be the professional, the ex-cult member, or a family member with a loved one involved in a cult."

– **MONICA PIGNOTTI, MSW, CSW, ex-Scientologist**

"In the first half of the 20th century, someone wrote that: "The broad mass of people falls victim to a big lie more easily than a small one," someone else that: "Work will set you free." In the second half of the 20th century, the instigators of the so-called "*American Way Association*" (a.k.a. "*the Amway Corporation*"), Rich DeVos and Jay Van Andel, have amassed hundreds of millions of dollars by following the first of these maxims and by promoting the second as "*the supreme truth*." At the start of the 21st century, their victims number tens of millions in 80 countries internationally; my own brother is one of them in England. However, it is generally accepted that, to lie to people in order to get their money is fraud, which is a form of theft. A former US Marine, Eric Scheibeler, was a victim of the *Amway* lie. He was deceived into working hard in pursuit of a cruel illusion for almost ten years of his adult life; what he lost was far more precious than his money — his human dignity. Eric Scheibeler's book is not just an insider's description of the occult system, which DeVos and Van Andel have baptized "*multi level marketing*," but an important social document bearing witness to the most dangerous phenomenon facing humanity — ritual belief instigated for the purpose of human exploitation (a.k.a. destructive cultism). As a result of his discovering free information published on the Internet, which the criminal controllers of *Amway* had tried to suppress, Eric Scheibeler was finally able to break the chains and escape from his psychological prison. As you will discover when you read this book, his ordeal did not end there. He could have run

away, but he took the conscious decision to stand his ground and fight against this evil. I salute his courage! By the way, the first of the above maxims was published in 1925, in Adolf Hitler's "*Mein Kampf*," the second remains painted above the gates of Auschwitz."

– **DAVID A. BREAR**

Author of *Amway: The American Dream Made Nightmare* (France)

"As one who has spent years researching and writing books and developing analytical tools for assessing the harm from network marketing programs, I am frustrated with the difficulties in getting regulators and consumers to look at the impossible math of all types of product-based pyramid schemes. The math and legal issues are enough to condemn highly leveraged breakaway compensation programs such as Amway's. But Mr. Scheibeler reveals a dimension with Amway that sets it apart in a class of its own — the extreme cultism that has grown up within its ranks. Based on Scheibeler's story, and my own background in psychology, I have to say that the psychological and social damage suffered by many Amway participants is far greater than any of us had imagined.

Amway would have you believe that failure to make money in their program is due to lack of skill or effort on the part of participants. Scheibeler paints an interesting picture of Amway dreamers subscribing to a continuing stream of sales tools and training to help them be successful at doing the business. What is comical here, is that almost no one in the program stops to ask whether their financial losses might be due to a fraudulent system, rather than to their own inadequacies. Scheibeler was one of the few who finally came to realize that failure to profit as promised had far more to do with Amway than with the distributor. He is like the child in the fable who shouted, "The emperor has no clothes."

Scheibeler and I both see cognitive dissonance as an appropriate explanation for the disparity between the belief systems or better judgment of participants — and their deceptive behavior. In order to succeed at Amway, one must first be deceived, then maintain a high level of deception (with the assistance of cultish control mechanisms), and finally go about deceiving others. Scheibeler's story is a chilling portrayal of just how true that is. The book is a great read, one I could not put down until it was finished. Scheibeler has it right now, and is doing penance by telling his story with candor and courage."

– **JON M. TAYLOR, PH.D., President, Consumer Awareness Institute
and Director, Pyramid Scheme Alert, Researcher and Author of *Product
Based Pyramid Schemes***

"A captivating story which speaks directly to the human heart. Eric Scheibeler has provided a well-documented, quite readable accounting of the pure seduction of the most subtle, and therefore most dangerous, manifestation of evil — that which cloaks itself in

the name and teachings of Jesus Christ. However, the actions of the antagonists in this story belie the hearts and minds that could not be further from the truth. These are people, I believe, whom our Lord addresses in the 25th chapter of Matthew with those telling words: “Depart from me — I never knew you.” I am a busy professional with absolutely no “free time” — yet I found the time to read this book and I trust you’ll find yourself doing the same.”

– **JOSEPH DE MAY, M.D., F.A.A.P.**

“Far too often Evangelical Christians have remained silent or ignorant when it comes to abuses within its own ranks. Little is said about abusive pastors, or cultic churches. Even less is said about helping victims of cults or spiritual abuse. Such things rarely come up on anyone’s missions committees, or any committees as a worthy cause. It would be unheard to even dream that the great Christian businessman such as Rich DeVos may be a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Yet that is exactly what Scheibeler contends. His experience in Amway is compelling evidence that Amway is abusive.

Eric N. Scheibeler’s Merchants of Deception masterfully and prophetically exposes this system of serious abuses in Amway and Quixtar. Scheibeler spells out a modern day tragedy — the promise of financial success, the subtle conditioning to achieve such success, the inability to gain the wealth promised, the ensuing blame and guilt management lays on distributors for not making it, and then the incredible high cost to achieve the false promise (i.e., 100-hour work weeks, exhaustion, financial ruin, depression, etc.) Concurrently, Scheibeler gradually realized that Amway and all its related enterprises was a program of lies, deceit, false promises, moral blackmail, and possible criminality at the top levels.

For Eric Scheibeler, possession of this truth was dangerous, it was possible life threatening. In sum, Eric Scheibeler in Merchants of Deception was a victim of a type of social influence that I have commonly seen over the last 17 years in my full time practice with victims of destructive cults. In spite of several serious reports of death threats, Eric Scheibeler refused to be silenced.

Typically, the church unknowingly reveres the abuser and discredits the victims. Yet the mission of the church is the opposite. Its mission is to silence the “Wolf” and mend the “Sheep,” not silence the “Sheep” and feed the “Wolf.” In Scheibeler’s case, Christian publishers nearly succeeded in silencing the sheep by refusing to publish his book!!!

Scheibeler’s Merchants of Deception should serve as a wake up call to those in the church who are unwittingly feeding the wolves! His book is a must read, a call to action.”

– **PAUL R. MARTIN, PH.D., Psychologist and Director, Wellspring Retreat, a rehabilitation and retreat center for those recovering from spiritual abuse and cultic affiliation**

Acknowledgements

There is very small group of family and friends who stood by us when all others ran away. Thank you for helping Patty and me pull our lives together to the point where we could start again. We had turned our backs on some of you. We recruited others of you into the Amway business, where you may have lost thousands of dollars and precious years. You were the ones who fed us when we had no money for food. You picked us up and encouraged us when we thought we could not go on. Our parents accepted us back and loved and cared for us in every way possible when we awoke and left our Amway life. For this, we will be forever deeply thankful.

In our terrifying exodus from Amway and its related motivational cults, we have seen the very worst in human nature. We have experienced an evil, a deception, and a darkness we did not know existed in mankind. During this period, we were exposed to the very best in human nature as well. God revealed himself and his boundless love through the kindness and compassion of people we had been indoctrinated to believe were “losers.” Their kindness, love, and forgiveness have been overwhelming.

The truth would never have been revealed to us had it not been for a few modern day heroes who braved bewildering odds and potential legal attacks to expose what they had learned to be true about the Amway Corporation, its founders, and related motivational organizations — and cults in general. Specifically, Ashley Wilkes, Sidney Schwartz, Steve Hassan, Robert Fitzpatrick, Deborah Layton, J. B. Meade, Scott Larsen, and Ruth Carter each, in some way, helped me escape a life of complete deception.

It was at a desperate time and at a point when I did not know if I would be able to write this book that I spent a single life-altering day in Colorado. I spent time with an incredible group of leaders. One at a time, people I met with Pastor Tommy Reid all spoke into my life truths I desperately needed to hear.

I would like to thank T. D. Jakes and Anthony Robbins for creating resources that assisted me in rebuilding my strength to a level where I could begin to function, think rationally, and take action.

Last and certainly not least, I would like to thank two incredible women, Maureen Haner and Nancy Lambert. They are two very special friends. Together they have been a boundless source of encouragement and inspiration. They worked countless hours at night and on weekends to edit my ramblings into the book you now hold in your hands. It would not have been possible without them. Their insights, determination to help others, and gifted editorial work have made this book what it is.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife, Patty, and our children, Adam, Rachel, and Hannah. Patty, you are the strongest, most loving, kind person I have ever known. Nearly all I know about Love and what is truly important in life I have learned from you. For far too long, you raised our children as a single parent, and for this I will be forever grateful. You stood by me and nursed me back to health from a point where I did not think I could go on. Despite all odds and adversity, you took care of our family. You are, and forever will be, the woman of my dreams. Adam, you have your mother's love and compassion for others. Rachel, your hugs and kisses still make my day bright. Hannah, your persistence and boundless energy make you someone very special to the whole family. I love you all more than life itself. I thank God for allowing me to be part of your lives. This book is dedicated to you, the most wonderful people on earth.

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Purpose

Despite your initial thoughts, you will not find this book to be an assault on Amway or Quixtar distributors. The purpose is, rather, to stop the incredibly well-orchestrated harm that is being done *to* them. You see, I myself was a high-level distributor who devoted nearly a decade to building a global business.

Entering Amway and Quixtar was the easy part. Leaving it, after achieving such a high level, has been an entirely different story. The secrets I discovered resulted in a threat on my life and unspeakable slanders being circulated about my family. But, I cannot keep silent. I feel compelled to share what really happened to me so other innocent people will not be led to financial slaughter and personal destruction.

My wife and I were first introduced to “The Business,” as distributors are taught to refer to the corporation, on November 15, 1989, and we got off to a relatively fast start as new distributors. We moved quickly through the ranks and went “Silver Direct” in our first year. During the next 10 years, we devoted all our energies and resources to The Business, resulting in our moving on to “Emerald,” a level achieved by only a small fraction of 1% of distributors in any year in North America. We recruited and sponsored literally thousands into our Amway business. With this background, you can see that I am not a spectator, an outsider, or someone who just gave it a quick try and now has an axe to grind.

I am a former Federal Auditor who, upon first seeing this business, evaluated it on the basis of logic, not emotion. Based on what I was told, shown, and observed, it looked very good. The great hopes and dreams my wife and I had for our family and future seemed about to be realized as we began to work on building *our business*. We sponsored many people into The Business and went from being attendees at seminars to being the only speakers at some of these daylong functions. It was not easy for two relatively shy people; neither of us had done much of any public speaking before. Nevertheless, in a few years we were onstage speaking to thousands. Our “upline” (people above our level in The Business and ones who had directly recruited us) even flew us to Argentina to speak to an organization there. I traveled through Japan to the Philippines and worked in many cities there expanding our business. The Amway business Patty and I developed, *our organization*, also expanded into Europe and South America.

My wife and I went from listening to motivational tapes every day to having tapes of our own seminars marketed internationally. In a few years, under my upline “Diamond’s” guidance, I left my corporate career and had a “retirement” party at the age of thirty. The American dream seemed to be very much alive — not only for us, but also for the friends we were going to lead into the Promised Land.

We continued to build our business and were given more and more responsibilities by our upline Diamond. (“Diamond” is an award level given by Amway to signify a very high level of success in the Amway business.) I attended the secretive, invitation-only Yager Network Marketing Institute (YNMI) that provided specialized training for rising “top guns.” I was also given the opportunity to run much of the backstage coordination of speakers and hosts at the many motivational “Dream Weekends” and “Family Reunions.”

These are two of the largest seminars each year in Amway with thousands in attendance. The Amway business Patty and I developed grew so large that by the January 1999 Dream Weekend, our group alone represented almost exactly 10% of those in attendance.

Working the backstage is considered a dream assignment for anyone in The Business. What a thrill for a regular couple like us to meet motivational guest speakers and personalities such as Oliver North, Dave Thomas, Robert Schuller, Zig Ziglar, Glenn Campbell, Roy Clark, and others. Not only that, but the backstage job also afforded me the opportunity to meet many of our personal heroes, the Amway Diamonds. We were captivated by the quality of life they described. Many referred to the “Diamond lifestyle” as affording them *six Saturdays and a Sunday, unlimited family time, and residual income to help others*. These rewards were a source of great motivation to Patty and me, as our faith and our family have always been of primary importance to us.

We learned there was a very specific pattern or system for success in the Amway business. As a matter of fact, we were told that **“within it there is a 100% success rate and outside of it a 0% success rate.”** My sponsor and the rest of my upline referred to this system for success continually. It involved the ongoing weekly purchase of cassette tapes, books for daily reading, videos, CD-ROMs, and tickets for the monthly seminars and frequent training sessions. (What we didn’t realize until much later is that, in essence, this system of success was little more than a gradual and unrelenting indoctrination.) We heard a college professor, who also happened to be a Direct Distributor, declare that this was the greatest educational system he had ever found. Almost all of the millionaire and multi-millionaire distributors praised this all-inclusive system as the most important resource they used in becoming wealthy **in their Amway business**. It’s hard to argue with results. There were hundreds who spoke of becoming wealthy in Amway by means of the same system.

Many prominent speakers outside of the Amway business would make similar representations. Respected author and lecturer Shad Helmstetter was brought in to speak to thousands of distributors. This is the endorsement he gave of both “the system” and “the business”:

“I have traveled around the world. I have met, gotten to know, interviewed, and followed up on, year after year, distributors from every level in the business. I have watched the system that you have. It is a system second to none. Don’t ever try to change it. They’ve got it right. Stay with it. I believe in the business because the business works.”¹

Many, like Mr. Helmstetter, would come in and speak of the virtues of our upline leaders as well. Our new leaders seemed to be people of unquestioned principle, speaking often about faith, character, courage, and integrity. The many Diamonds who were brought in to inspire us affirmed that the leaders we were working with (almost always a husband and wife team) set the standard in the area of values. These couples were bold in proclaiming their faith and patriotism and also in practicing what seemed then like unparalleled generosity. The reason they were so successful, we were told, was due to their having helped many, many others succeed financially. We were reminded that the same practice of helping others would become the measure of *our* success.

¹ “Walters” Free Enterprise 1997 Highlights videotape

The Diamond-level distributors became real-life heroes not only to us, but to our children as well. I studied and emulated their every move and mannerism. What a fulfilling life we were going to lead by helping so many of the people we loved! Our group, indeed, was more like a family to us than friends or business partners. We had little time for any relationships outside of Amway; consequently, our children referred to members of our new Amway family as “aunt” or “uncle” so-and-so. This is an Amway pattern, such that there are distributors who have affectionately named their pets, and in some instances their children, after members of their upline.

After achieving the level of Emerald, we spent more and more time around many very wealthy distributors and even had some personal time with billionaire Amway founder Rich DeVos. It was this increased contact with high-level distributors, from Diamond through Crown Ambassador (the highest level of success in the Amway business), that finally permitted a chance event of fate to lead us to some terribly disturbing discoveries. These inadvertent discoveries eventually led to an agonizing exodus from “our” business, my becoming a federal witness, and the actual publication of this book. The carefully guarded secrets I discovered, and am about to share with you, became a nightmare that plagued our every waking moment, an evil monster that ate at the fabric of our carefully structured lives like a swiftly moving cancer.

I was horrified to discover and later document that the Amway and Quixtar business is used in a “bait and switch” fraud of global proportions. As much as 94% of some Diamonds’ income is derived not from Amway, but from another secretive source altogether. As a result of this, nearly all of the thousands of people we brought into the Amway business lost money. Some lost tens of thousands of dollars. We were unknowingly used to extract millions of dollars of good people’s hard-earned money for our upline Diamonds’ covert business. Amway’s owners and management have known of this deception for 20 years and have failed to stop it. Looking the other way has made them wealthy beyond belief.

Before we entered The Business, I figured the only danger was that I might waste a few weekends and lose a couple hundred dollars of our savings trying to move product that wouldn’t sell. After 10 years in The Business, I realized the danger had unbelievably escalated not only to the worst kind of slimy character assassination, but also to having my life threatened.

I will tell you the reactions of our upline leaders and fellow Amway distributors as we revealed the truth. People we had admired and loved worked insidiously to undermine our position in the community. Our horrifying escape from “our” Amway business, its related “support” system, and our upline may keep you awake at night. The unnamed symbiotic relationship between Amway and its related Motivational Organizations has unimaginable psychological and financial control over many of its distributors. In fact, the enormous motivational organization, which I was a part of, is a cult (using the very definition of such provided to Amway distributors on tape and at a seminar). This cult exercises control and manipulation over distributors beyond your imagination. We got started in this venture to experience the freedom of owning our own business and setting our own income in what was described to us as the purest form of free enterprise.

You may be thinking, “Come on now, this is simply a harmless business opportunity, right?” My friend, I wish this were true. However, it is not. We have been advised repeatedly that we could “sell our business.” Included in that sale would most

likely be a half-inch-thick secrecy or confidentiality agreement. My silence is not for sale at any price. I was used as a dupe to swindle so many people that I cannot be silent and live with myself. Already, I have lost almost every friend I ever had, been bankrupted, and forced to the brink of foreclosure since speaking, on a small scale, of what I know to be the truth. It is a strange irony that those I loved the most now see me as the enemy. Many of my closest friends have participated effectively in our character assassination. Some pray for us, believing that Satan is using us to do a great evil.

Publishing this book is against the advice of almost all who care about me, but it is one of several actions I am taking to stop the harm being done to so many families around the world who are unconsciously buying into a cult.

This book may also serve as a guide to help many families who do not understand the seemingly bizarre actions and motivations of loved ones in Amway/Quixtar. This is not written out of a spirit of anger or retribution. I pity the people who took great liberties with our trust and used us as unwitting dupes to extract millions from the people we love most. One day these cult-like leaders will have to face themselves in the mirror.

If this book helps you or someone you love, I am one step closer to undoing the damage I did as a trusting Amway distributor; a step closer to being able to live in peace.

“The difficulty is that a counterfeit initially looks so good and feels so good that one rarely suspects something is wrong. Only when the counterfeit is examined and compared with the real thing does the counterfeit become apparent. By then it’s often too late...”*

— John Ankerberg and John Weldon

* Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, Harvest House (Eugene, Oregon) 1999, p. xviii

Theft by Deception

*“Amway is one of the most effective marketing and distribution companies in the world. Motivation and concern for others set Amway people apart from the rest of the crowd. They know that if you can change one person’s life for the better, you have helped a community and changed the world.”**

— Robert R. Holcomb, M.D., Ph.D.

Our journey into the darkness began uneventfully. As a young, newly married couple, Patty and I were very much in love and enjoyed spending as much time as we could together. I had a job as a Federal Auditor, working for a branch of the Department of Energy. The position provided a good salary for a recent college graduate. It was a nice upgrade for me after working in McDonald’s, factories, and cafeterias for minimum wage for most of my life.

I had moved out of my home my senior year of high school and understood, firsthand, what it was like to struggle. The struggles of life had overtaken my parents’ marriage many years before. They each, in turn, found and re-married very special people and began new lives. I grew up living with my mother and stepfather.

In terms of a home environment, we did not have much money. Too many of the decisions seemed to revolve around what we could afford, not what was most important to us. Money seemed to be a master that controlled our most important decisions. My mother and stepfather were hardworking, honest people. Despite this, we always seemed to struggle. This had a profound effect on how I viewed success. As far back as I can remember, I wanted to succeed and to be in a position to help the people I loved.

I landed my first real job at McDonald’s. Working the grill was a great learning experience. Many other employees were just putting in their time, but I was learning how businesses worked. One night the owner came in, shook hands with the employees, and then left in a powder-blue Jaguar. Most of the other employees mocked him for being the “rich guy,” but I was excited. I had heard his story. He started as a waiter and then met Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald’s. Ray took him under his wing and mentored him. It wasn’t long before he owned several McDonald’s restaurants. I just knew that if I worked hard enough, one day I would be like my boss. Perhaps he would be *my* mentor. Somehow, I knew that I, too, would become an entrepreneur.

Although bored with school, I read constantly. The usual focus of my reading was about real-life “rags-to-riches” stories. The Horatio Alger stories intrigued me. I had no interest in get-rich-quick schemes. My focus was on people who founded successful

* Robert R. Holcomb, M.D., Ph.D., Vanderbilt University, Amagram, May 1999

businesses on a shoestring, faith, and hard work. Because of this, I started a lawn maintenance service and soon had over 30 customers. Through this experience, I learned a lot about both the good and bad nature of people. Some were kind and encouraging, while others treated me like the “yard boy.”

I worked hard and finished high school. Soon after graduation, I was off to a large state college. For far too long, I majored in fun, and my grades reflected that. I was still searching for the right answers for my future. Then, because so many of my relatives had served in the U.S. military, I thought I should explore that avenue. I attended Marine Corps Officer Training Boot Camp at MCDEC (Marine Corps Development and Education Center) in Quantico, Virginia.

This proved to be one of the best experiences of my life, in terms of giving me discipline. I graduated in the honor platoon and realized how much further I could push myself both physically and psychologically than I had previously thought. While my patriotism increased as a result of this, I wanted a little more freedom in my choices than a military career as an officer would afford me. Upon graduating from the training program, I took the option of declining my commission as a Second Lieutenant and was honorably discharged.

Around this time, I decided to transfer to another university campus to get a fresh start. I didn’t know any other students there, but that helped me get focused on my studies and my future. My transfer was one of the single most important decisions of my life, because it was at the new campus I met Patty, the love of my life! Her quiet confidence and gentle nature made her different from any other woman I had ever met. Before long, when I wasn’t with her, she was all I could think about. She wasn’t just special — she was, and still is, “the woman of my dreams.”

I met her parents for lunch one day and they were just like the Waltons from the old family television show. They were kind and strong in a quiet way. They displayed the same warm, compassionate nature that had drawn me to Patty. This seemed a bit unusual to me, considering the fact that I was dating their beautiful 20-year-old, only daughter. I now marvel at their openness. (As the father of two young daughters, I can’t imagine having the same composure. I would be tempted to greet prospective boyfriends while wearing full camouflage with a Bowie knife in my teeth....! Fortunately, I have several years to prepare myself for that encounter.)

I graduated, with a degree in business, a year before Patty and started my career with the Government as a Federal Auditor. It was exciting to begin traveling the country as I worked within large corporations. My first audit took me to Jackson, Mississippi. It was a wonderful place where I met many nice people, but there was something wrong — a part of me was missing. I had met the woman of my dreams, but I was terrified of the idea of commitment and loving her completely. I was scared to death of marriage and probably took the job in far-away Mississippi to avoid the decision. This was a strange contradiction. It seemed that nothing good in my life had ever lasted; I was afraid to get my hopes up and put my heart on the line.

There are a few moments in each of our lives when we stand at life-changing crossroads. One of mine came on a warm spring night in Jackson. I lived in a beautiful apartment complex which had many elderly residents. Many were widows or widowers. I was walking my dog one evening and saw several elderly men and women out doing the same thing. We exchanged pleasantries and commented on the seasonal weather. I

realized they were very much alone — and I realized *I* was alone. Unless I did something different, I would become them. The only difference between us was the passing of time.

I got on a plane and flew back across the country. I asked Patty...okay, I *begged* her to marry me! Fortunately, she saw enough good qualities in me to take the chance. We drove straight to a mall to put a small down payment on an engagement ring. What a great day that was! We were married in August of 1986, honeymooned in Cancun, and returned to begin our married life at the next audit site in Miami.

The nature of my job meant that I was assigned to one big city after another for months at a time. This got old quickly. Patty and I longed to be back home near our families, and we wanted to put down some roots. Overall, I found the daily routine of auditing rather boring, but I did learn a great deal about documentation while employed in that field. Working with people really seemed to create more personal satisfaction for me than working with numbers and spreadsheets. So, I presented my boss with a two-weeks notice. Once home, I landed an entry-level management position as an underwriter for a large insurance company. Fortunately, although this new job paid less than my auditing one, we experienced an increase in lifestyle. Patty accepted a job with the same company and we were able to spend a great deal of time together. Acquaintances commented that they couldn't hack that much time with their spouse, but we very much enjoyed taking breaks and lunches together.

We bought our first home, and it was an incredible dump. Some homes are fixer uppers and some blower uppers; this one was right on the border. It was a dump, but it was **our** dump. We took great pride in working together to make it a nice place to live. Most of our friends shook their heads in disbelief when they first saw it, but with time and with a lot of "sweat equity," the house turned out great. It was a double home with three bedrooms on each side. The biggest advantage was that the rent from the one side paid most of the mortgage. I studied real-estate seminars and used the equity in this property to buy several others. Finally, we were beginning to plan for our future.

We spent a lot of time working on the home and met several couples who lived on our street. One of these couples told us they had gotten into Amway through a mutual acquaintance. Privately, we thought this was a real joke. They had put pictures of a Mercedes and enormous homes on their refrigerator and spoke often of Zack Walters, this "Diamond Guy," who was going to help them get wealthy. I distinctly remember feeling that they spoke of him with an **unnatural** level of respect. It was as if they thought he were God-like. Our neighbors told us that our mutual friends, Kerry and Chris,* had "gone Direct," whatever that meant. Because I supervised a woman at work who had told me she was in Amway, I mentioned to her that Patty had some friends who had "gone Direct." She informed me that they must be making at least \$25,000 a year and were probably working just part-time. That was equal to my full-time salary at that point. I still remember thinking I would NOT go and *sell soap*, even for that much extra money! I was too busy building a mini real-estate empire to be bothered with door-to-door soap sales.

One day, Kerry and Chris, the couple who had "gone Direct," called us because their printer had stopped working. They knew I was handy with computers and asked if I would come look at it. We went over and I tinkered with it for awhile and then gave it the last rites. Soon the four of us were sitting around their dining room table. They were very engaging and wanted to know more about us and how our properties were doing. They

* Not their real names

asked so many questions about us that, out of politeness, I asked them how their Amway business was doing. They seemed almost to cringe at the mention of the word “Amway” and advised us that it wasn’t really Amway. It was their own business and it involved hundreds of companies. Kerry and Chris told us it was going better than they had ever expected and wanted to know if we wanted to see “The Business” sometime. We agreed to look at it sometime, more to be polite than out of any real interest. Kerry said he would call us and we could get together when he had time.

As promised, Kerry called about a week later and set up an appointment to come over. Soon we found ourselves at our kitchen table seeing “the plan” for the very first time. He explained that it was far more than just Amway. Kerry told us that “Amway was only the corporate supplier.” We saw a catalog with a huge selection of recognized brand-name products. (Amway later developed brochures with the quote, “Known for the Company we keep.”¹ This went on to list companies like Playskool, Samsung, Goodyear, Magnavox, Nikon, Maxell, Toshiba, Kodak, Adidas, Nestle, Seiko, Zenith, Sanyo, Sharp, Whirlpool, Kellogg’s, and many others.) The most striking thing I remember about that day was seeing the book entitled *Profiles of Success*. It depicted many, many couples who became wealthy in the business we had just been shown. Over the next decade, I would become so familiar with their stories that I could practically recite them by heart. At that first meeting, Kerry told us that these Amway millionaires were actually willing to come teach us how to do what they had done. But we had to be willing to do the work.

They explained there was a specific pattern of success helping all these people become wealthy in Amway or “The Business.” The word *Amway* was spoken only once in the two-hour presentation. They promised us that we would have access to monthly seminars and ongoing training by people who had gained wealth through The Business. The catalog and the diversity of products impressed me. Kerry explained there were so many products that we did not have to sell things. This was a relief, as neither Patty nor I were salespeople. Apparently, our business would be just to purchase products we were already using from their special catalog at discount-store savings and then show the discount catalog to other potential “members,” recruiting them to do the same. It sounded good. At this first meeting and later at other meetings, these common representations were made: “30% average off on everything you buy” and “Can you imagine taking 1/3 of your household budget and putting it into your savings account every year?”²

Much later, we saw a brochure for recruiting potential distributors. It alleged potential annual savings for a family of four of \$6,481.³ It explained that these massive savings were the result of two factors. First, “we” did not have the cost of traditional retail establishments. Large amounts of revenue were normally eaten up by the cost of buildings, labor, employees, and employee theft. Second, tremendous economies of scale were negotiated to the benefit of the distributors. Specifically, we were able to get a far better price on sneakers, for example, because Amway purchased in volume — perhaps 10,000 pairs at a time. We only needed to purchase one pair as distributors for our own use, but we reaped the benefit of the price negotiated for the bulk purchase. (The 30% average savings on most household purchases was one of the most common deceptive representations made to prospects to induce participation. Our sponsors would not leave

¹ SA-1386 Amway Corporation, Copyright 1996

² HVC-4 videotape

³ TL-244 Internet Services Corporation, Copyright 1991, 1997

catalogs with us to check prices. We had to take the promise of savings on faith.)

“Some people that are brand new, they come... they say... Who sells? Somebody sells... I always like to say to them... ‘when you find that person let me know.’ ”*

— Amway Crown Jody Victor

I was not interested in sales, so it appealed to me to simply “use your own products and teach others to do the same.” As we referred others and taught them to shop “from themselves,” profits from these sales would come back to us monthly. The “middle man” would be cut out and profits that normally went to traditional retailers would now come to us. This “wholesale” arrangement, we were told, was what created the many millionaires and multi-millionaires in *Profiles of Success*. A black information pack, containing lots of literature and two cassette tapes, was left for our review. It was a catchy idea, but we were indifferent at that point. Before they left, Kerry and Chris arranged to come back in two days to pick up the information and to answer any questions we had.

Before our prospective partners arrived, we were already having an argument over The Business. I knew the value of mentors. I knew we needed to get around wealthy people if we were ever going to succeed. After many trials and tribulations, Patty had given birth to our first child, Adam, and did not ever want to be away from him. In the middle of this “discussion,” the doorbell rang. It was our Amway friends.

Somewhat to our surprise, Kerry and Chris did not want to talk much about Amway at all. Instead, they focused on helping us create a list of our dreams and goals. Sure we wanted to be debt free, have a nice home in a safe neighborhood, drive newer and safer cars, vacation, help our parents, and be together; what did that have to do with how this business worked? They pulled out *Profiles of Success* again and we thumbed through it. They told us the Amway Diamonds in the book had extensive family time and no work schedule. This lifestyle was constantly referred to as one of “six Saturdays and a Sunday.” Because of the residual nature of the income, the more you made, the less time it took. (We actually found out *much* later that no one lives this reported lifestyle.)

Don’t you want to be like Ray Kroc?

“Amway is an outstanding company that understands the power of motivating people to discover and reach their potential.”**

— Zig Ziglar

One of the many analogies used by Amway distributor leaders to illustrate this

* *It’s Unbelievable* audiotape, DBR 897

** Zig Ziglar, Amagram, January 1999

was a reference to the McDonald's franchising system. *Would you rather own one McDonald's or be Ray Kroc and have the right to franchise or duplicate your efforts?* Isn't it far better to have 10% of one hundred businesses than 100% of one? By helping many people succeed in owning their own franchise, so to speak, you could literally work yourself out of a "job" and live comfortably on the residual income generated by the businesses you started. This residual income stream could even be passed on to your children as part of your estate.

There was "no way to lose money," as it was the perfect business opportunity with "no employees or overhead."[†] When we questioned them about the apparent pyramid nature of the business, we were advised that "**no one** makes more money off your business than you." Kerry later informed us, "This is a legal requirement that keeps this business from being an illegal pyramid."

Profiles of Success sold me. It seemed obvious to me that this business worked! As a corporation, Amway was doing around two billion dollars a year in volume, was dealing with many of the largest manufacturers in the country, and had created many millionaires, as evidenced by *Profiles of Success*. This appealed to me very strongly. All my life, I had dreamed of succeeding and being able to provide very well for those I loved. I wanted to be able to create a large income — and we were advised that the Diamonds were making at least \$250,000 a year in Amway. Most important of all, to have unlimited family time would be a dream come true! I had always wanted to have my own business, and this looked like the answer. I did not believe anyone was willing to work harder than I would in this business. If I could meet one of the many millionaire mentors, I knew we would succeed.

We were very fortunate in that we were able to meet an Amway Double Diamond, Zack Walters,[‡] within just a few weeks. Zack was "showing the plan" at a home about 10 minutes from where we lived. We were told he was a *millionaire-maker*, a former teacher who had himself become a millionaire in this business in only four years. We were later informed that "he bought a home appraised at a million and a quarter when he was 29 years old... the same year he bought a bank." He certainly sounded like someone who understood the principles of success, but we remained cautious.

For some reason, we expected him to be somewhat arrogant just because he was wealthy. When he drove up in his Mercedes, people were rushing to hold the door open for him and to carry his briefcase. Upon entering the home, he was handed a cup of coffee, already prepared exactly to his liking. It was almost as if a member of the Royal Family was visiting. He wore a hand-tailored suit, expensive leather shoes, and tens of thousands of dollars in jewelry; all of which certainly made him look like the picture of success. This very slick image was exactly what we had expected. But, much to our surprise, he was very friendly and had more than his share of charisma. He joked and laughed with those he knew. He casually walked around the room and met most of the new people. His sincere smile and warm handshake made us feel as if we had just met a new friend. This was not at all what we had anticipated. After about 15 minutes of small talk, our sponsor got up and introduced Zack as the speaker for the evening.

We expected a very hard-core, high-pressured sales pitch. We could not have been more wrong. Zack began his presentation with a few lighthearted jokes that set most of

[†] Typical representations

[‡] Not his real name

the audience at ease. The presentation moved into a description of how hard Zack had worked before The Business in an effort to succeed. It seemed as if no matter what he had tried to do in the past, he always ran out of either time or money. By now, he had my attention, because this really sounded like me!

Zack went on to explain that many people's lack of success is due to our engaging in production work of one sort or another. Specifically, most of us toiled our entire lives, exchanging time for dollars. It would not matter if we were bricklayers or neurosurgeons, as both merely traded hours for dollars. No matter how long we did this, we would always be busy. Zack used many analogies to illustrate the point that most people were working harder and longer for less and less. He emphasized that, according to the Social Security Administration, 95% of the people at retirement would be either dead, dead broke, or still working. Only 5% would ever become financially free.

How could anyone succeed against such staggering odds? It was really quite simple, he explained. All we had to do was get advice from people who had already achieved success. How do you stay broke? Simple. You just get advice from people in the 95% group and follow it. To succeed, all people needed to do was "plug into" others who have already succeeded, those who are in the 5% group. Simply put, wealthy people could teach you how to become wealthy. Even the best and most well-meaning parents, teachers, accountants, attorneys, friends, and co-workers could not possibly help you accomplish something they themselves had never experienced. How could someone give you directions to a place they have never been? This made sense to me. I whispered to Patty, "It's what I've been telling you. All I need to do is get advice from a millionaire."

Zack then spent an enormous amount of time developing people's dreams. He claimed that God's word said "a man without vision shall perish." Zack stressed the vital importance of dreams and goals. He explained that most people don't focus on these things but, instead, focus on the negative in life. Soon, we all were thinking about living debt free, driving newer vehicles, living in newer homes in nicer neighborhoods, taking our children to Disney World, helping loved ones, and spending time with our families.

Before long, we had verbalized these goals and objectives. Zack commended us, saying most people get so busy earning a living that they have no time to design a life. He declared that many people spend more time planning a family vacation than planning their entire future. Obviously, *we* were going to be different, and it truly was exciting to think about the possibilities *our* future held. Zack concluded the presentation with a quick review of the logistics of the Amway sales and marketing plan. This only took about 15 minutes of the two-hour meeting. The details became clearer as we saw the plan again.

Zack described what we saw as a very specific 2-to-5-year plan for financial freedom. Once again, *Amway* was mentioned only once, briefly, at the very end. It was described as only serving a supply function. The Business operated on a simple concept in that you just changed shopping habits to purchase goods and services from yourself, at a 30% discount over the retail stores where you currently did your shopping. Due to these economies of scale, the business was commonly referred to as a "**wholesaling business.**"

Now, as consumers, we collectively had two billion dollars in annual purchasing power. This represented an incredible increase in leverage, affording us the ability to purchase things from ourselves at "wholesale." In wrapping up the meeting, he thumbed through *Profiles of Success*, in which he was featured. There was one statement Zack made that I can still hear as clearly as if it were yesterday. He revealed, "*This business*

didn't make me a millionaire... It made me a multi-millionaire... Everybody has got to be something." Patty and I were almost in shock at the prospect of having a multi-millionaire helping us personally. To make it even better, he spoke of his faith and time with his family and of things we all cherish. He shared how he and his wife enjoyed greeting the school bus together when the kids got home. He had found that elusive balance in life and was willing to give us directions. I thought for sure this was it. I had found my mentor.

There followed a whirlwind of introductory and follow-up meetings, and it finally became time to "break open our kit." The only thing we knew this kit contained was a "vendor number" to track all of the business volume back to us for payment. We were surprised and confused to see the box was filled with Amway products. Was this really Amway or not? It was explained that technically we were wholesale business owners and that Amway merely served as our supplier. The most important part of the business was the support side, which included the team of people in our upline. They would teach us how to build a network through which large amounts of product would flow. On this note, our sponsors completed the application and handed it to us to sign.

We were given this advice many times in The Business: "There is **nothing** in the Amway kit to teach you how to build the business. Rich and Jay [references to Amway Co-Founders Rich DeVos and Jay Van Andel] haven't sponsored anyone in 20 years... your upline is the source of information, as they have developed the organization that moves the majority of all the products." We did not understand clearly if this was or was not Amway. Specifically, it was not clear what the difference was between Amway and our upline. Despite the initial confusion, we were excited to have a chance to build our future together. We signed the Amway application, and our sponsors, Kerry and Chris, congratulated us. We had no hint that what we had just signed up for would take us to the brink of hell — nearly complete personal, financial, emotional, and spiritual destruction.

Getting Started

Kerry and Chris scheduled a time to help us get some people together for a meeting. They left more tapes and a follow-up pack for us to go through. They left most of the literature and products on our kitchen table, but took the box with them. They joked that we would get the whole box once we sponsored someone. This seemed a little odd, but it was a distinct pattern we would later learn, duplicate, and teach. We closed the door as they cheerfully congratulated us on becoming new business owners. They were nice people and they were actually going to help us succeed. We listened to the tapes, which were full of motivation and inspiration. The speakers were from different backgrounds, but all had developed incredible wealth and an enviable lifestyle via The Business.

Many of the speakers on the tapes said they originally held the misconception that Amway was a door-to-door sales business, just like we had first thought. I decided that the concept of the wholesaling business, or Network Marketing, seemed simple enough. I knew I could easily find plenty of people who would be interested in saving 30% off their shopping while developing a large secondary income. What an incredible concept! You would actually succeed only as a result of helping your friends save money and succeed in their own business. This truly was what I later heard renowned author and motivational lecturer Zig Ziglar describe as a "Win/Win" opportunity.

Patty and I still did not have a complete grasp of the mechanics of how The Business worked. It was reassuring to know that Kerry and other members of our “upline” would always be there to explain the details until we were more comfortable with them. This was like having a personal business consultant you did not have to pay. This mentorship program was one of the most appealing and key benefits of this business. What a blessing to have successful people leading the way for us.

Patty and I began studying the follow-up pack, which described the mechanics of starting your own business. The literature advised that to have a successful meeting, we needed to invite at least twice the number of people we expected to come. In the pack, we also were given “inviting” techniques and instruction on how to handle certain questions our friends might ask. I was very clearly coached to make certain not to use the words “Amway,” “products,” or “selling” in the phone calls to friends. There were many approaches suggested, but the basic call went like this:

Hi, Joe. It's John. How are the kids? How's work? The reason I am calling is that you seem like a very business-oriented guy. Are you interested in making more money?

To better handle their response, we were given a tape called “Telephone Inviting.” A very successful and powerful Amway Double Diamond (a former Amway Distributor Association Board member) had created this teaching tape. I followed the instructions on that tape almost word for word. The advice given on the tape was to say this:

*The reason I asked you... I have my own business; I have gone into business with a friend of mine who has a **wholesaling** business. They are **wholesaling** all over the country and several other countries. We're handling for Spalding, Westinghouse, General Electric, Craig, and Nutrilite and many other companies. And one of the things we're doing is expanding right now and it looks like there is a good possibility that we may be expanding in your area. I really don't know for sure. We're looking for a couple of people that have their act pretty well together that have some management background and some management skills.⁴*

The GETTING STARTED literature gave specific responses to other questions I might be asked. They were as follows:

Question: “Is it Amway?”

Response: “We get goods and services from over 2,000 different manufacturers. Are you looking for a particular product line or what?”

Question: “Is it selling?”

Response: “Do you like to sell?” “No? Great! I'm not looking for some door-to-door, party plan sales person. We're looking for some level-headed people

⁴ E-178 *Telephone Inviting* audiotape

to run and manage their own business.”

Question: “Is it legal?”

Response: “Do you think I’d call you about something that could hurt you or your family?”⁵

These responses seemed to allay my own questions, and I figured they accurately portrayed what The Business had evolved into. Most of the people I called did, indeed, have some level of interest. This proved to me that the system worked. Had I made the calls without the tapes and literature, I would have been tongue-tied.

“The System”

*“The case is...each and every one of you has an opportunity today that is frankly much better than the opportunity was many years ago. You have more tools for you to use. You have more experienced leadership as everyone has learned over the past years...to help guide you along the way.”**

— Doug DeVos

Every successful program has a system. The one used by The Business was later described as a “field proven multi media professional development program.”⁶ As a matter of fact, it was not only field proven, there was a *100% success rate* among those distributors who utilized it and, in turn, taught this pattern of success. We soon met many wealthy Amway distributors at large seminars, who gave all the credit of their financial success to the system. Most were openly Christian and praised both God and the system for their good fortune. We were getting great results on the phone calls and were very excited at the prospect of helping our friends. Most were young, ambitious couples with families, and they could use some help in the area of finances. This venture was looking like a dream come true.

Kerry and Chris loaned us a copy of *Profiles of Success* to keep until we received the one we had ordered. We stayed awake late every night reading each Diamond’s success story. Most all had struggled before they entered The Business. From that book and from the tapes we were now avidly listening to, we learned that these people had become full-time parents. Making money was not the highest priority in their lives. Most all spoke about “the system.” Many praised God for their new lives. I was not a deeply spiritual person at that point, but it gave me a sense of reassurance that we were dealing

⁵ GETTING STARTED literature from Follow-Up Pack

* Doug DeVos, Head of North American Operations, quote from Amway Special Guests Speakers D. DeVos, B. Kerkstra, GDL 96-21

⁶ TL-440 Internet Services Corporation (CR) — Content reviewed and approved by Amway

with people of faith and integrity.

The tapes we listened to spoke not only of business success, but also of patriotism, family, and strong values. Patty and I wondered how we could have thought this was some stupid door-to-door sales business. This was something great, and we were going to be part of it. It was truly our chance to work hard for ourselves and succeed. Many of the Diamond-level distributors we met in person, or saw pictured in the literature, wore large diamonds, drove luxury cars, and lived in palatial homes. This flaunting of wealth did not interest me. However, my auditor's training to question everything was appeased, because these trappings supplied documentation and verification that this business worked. To Patty and me, "making it" did not necessarily mean owning a Rolls Royce, expensive jewelry, and a home big enough to get lost in. At that point, success meant having the freedom to be together as a family whenever we chose. It meant being in a financial position to help those we loved. The Business just provided a financial vehicle to take us from where we were to where we wanted to go in life. We weren't going to change or get lost in this process.

Sometime early into the business, Kerry and Chris began promoting a weekend seminar with Dexter Yager. He was spoken of not only as the most successful distributor in Amway, but also in the history of all Network Marketing businesses. Before The Business, Dexter had driven a beer truck in Rome, New York. Now, when people spoke of him, it was with an unusual awestruck reverence. He was doing about a billion dollars a year in business. But, being new, we did not want to take the time or spend the money for a whole weekend, even with an Amway guru. We settled instead on driving almost two hours to attend just the Sunday afternoon session to hear Dexter's leadership talk.

We thought we found the right building; there were hundreds of well-dressed men and women streaming into it. We asked a few people if this was the Amway seminar. They answered something like, "Walters International," and kept walking past us. Confused, and feeling like an idiot, I asked someone else if this was the Amway seminar. Again, this person corrected me and said, "This is Walters Enterprises." Then, seeing our very real confusion, he walked us in so we could buy our tickets. It turned out that the business name we kept hearing was the name of Diamond Zack Walters' Amway distributorship. We quickly learned that saying *Amway* was taboo. This seemed unusual; it did not make much sense that this was a "dirty word" among what seemed like a large group of Amway distributors.

We purchased our tickets and walked into a large hall that seated about 1,500 people. The women in the audience wore conservative dresses, and the men were nearly all clean-shaven and in suits. It was a sharp-looking group. The energy in the room was contagious. We met a few people, and they all seemed friendly and upbeat. Someone walked onstage and began to warm up the group, pep-rally style. Many yelled with excitement. Again, this seemed odd, but we were intrigued, wondering what caused the near evangelical fervor in the room.

After several speakers had each worked the crowd into an even more excited state, Zack and Molly Walters were brought to the stage as our host and hostess for the day. The crowd seemed suddenly to have lost their minds! There must have been a three- or four-minute standing ovation. It was all Zack could do to calm them down. I now felt even more fortunate for having had personal contact with someone this important. When Molly spoke, she was emotional about the blessings this business had brought to them.

She also seemed to be very sincere and down to earth.

Zack took the microphone and spent quite some time telling us of the successful background of the speaker he was about to introduce. He described Dexter Yager as a man who had become very wealthy due to his uncompromising willingness to serve other people. It looked like the plaster might literally vibrate loose from the ceiling when the thunderous applause erupted as soon as Dexter emerged onstage. To Patty and me, the remarkable enthusiasm seemed both odd and wonderful at the same time.

We had never been to either a business or church meeting that had this level of emotion and excitement. These people had an absolute passion for life. We also were encouraged that someone as successful as Dexter Yager would come back to help us, the new recruits. I do not remember much of the specifics of his speech that day. The sight of the room filled with over 1,000 enthusiastic people was more than enough motivation for me to get going. (Little did I know then that, one day, Patty and I would also have an enthusiastic audience of Amway distributors several times that size cheering for us.)

We ran into members of our upline support team. They greeted us enthusiastically and commented on what a sharp couple we were. They were all extremely positive and radiated hope. Soon, all we could think of was getting back home and making business calls. We were very excited!

In short order, we had two meetings to which our friends came to see the plan. My sponsor, Kerry, did one meeting for us where, right off the bat, we sponsored four distributors. The momentum was beginning to build when we got some incredible news. Zack Walters had asked about us personally and was going to come to our home to do a meeting for us. We knew he had helped many people become wealthy. All we could think of was what a true blessing it was to have a young millionaire coming to our home to help us and our friends secure our futures.

We had no idea what kind of future this visit would *really* secure for us...

"Some people are hungry for power over others. A quick way for them to gain control over others is to tempt people with the opportunity to discover some 'knowledge' unavailable outside of an exclusive group."^{IST}

[**Note:** For clarification, let me state that the quotes and representations referenced in this book are not necessarily in exact chronological order, but rather in topical order. They are indicative of the statements and business philosophies that were promoted to either prospects or distributors in Amway.]

^{IST} Smith, P.W., Hayes, C.P., McRoberts, K.D., *In Search of Truth*. Springfield, MO:Radiant Life, 1997

Seeing Is Believing

*“The vision of Jay Van Andel and Rich DeVos has opened doors of opportunity for millions of entrepreneurs and their families all over the world. The remarkable character and achievements of these men — now continuing with the second generation — provide the solid foundation for their remarkable company and the businesses of Amway entrepreneurs. Like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Amway has been a champion of the economic principles that create greater opportunities and prosperity for all.”**

— Thomas J. Donohue, President & CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The Amway bonus schedule was beginning to make more sense now that we had seen the plan several times. All the products you purchased were tracked back to you by your distributor number and assigned a point value. You were compensated at the end of the month for all the business volume that went through your organization. This is where the power of leveraging or duplication was evident.

We would be paid on a sliding scale from 100 PV (Point Value) through 7500 PV. The bonuses started at 3% and ranged up the scale to 25% when you hit 7500 PV. It was still a little confusing in that Kerry and Zack drew out “\$100 circles” when showing the plan. Each distributorship was depicted doing \$100 in volume. The speakers referred to “doing your hundred” often. In reality, it took almost \$220 in purchases to equal 100 PV on the bonus schedule. When I questioned Kerry about it, he said something like, “This is how we have always done it,” and, “Most people do not find it confusing.”

I remember thinking I must not have communicated to him very well that we and some of our people were finding it misleading. He had answered the question, but, at the same time, seemed to be ignoring the issue. It seemed like he didn’t understand what I had told him. I did not realize it at that time, but I had just stepped over one of the boundaries you were never supposed to cross. **You were not to question upline for any reason.** The meeting remained friendly because, as a new person, I was unaware of the many unspoken rules governing behavior in The Business. It would be quite awhile before Patty and I were fully indoctrinated.

We had begun sponsoring our friends almost immediately. We sponsored my best friend, Paul, first. We then sponsored some young professionals I worked with. Kerry and Chris helped us break open the new members’ kits and go through the paperwork until we became more familiar with the process. They explained that they intentionally took away each kit box after emptying its contents on the table of new distributors. This would

* Amagram, February 1999

encourage them to begin using “their own” products. Most were surprised, as we were, to see they were almost exclusively Amway products. We were puzzled to see Kerry and Chris remove a small white form we had never seen in *our* literature. It was Amway literature that advised all distributors to sell products to 10 customers per month. We were told to take these forms out and throw them away. They were part of the old door-to-door Amway. This was the new wholesale, networking phase of Amway. We were just supposed to use our own new household products and teach others to do the same. This made us comfortable, as no one we knew wanted to *sell* Amway to family and friends.

The handful of distributors we had sponsored were very motivated to get people out to see Zack. We all were impressed by the fact that he and Molly had traveled around the world, and yet he was taking a night out of his life to come and help us. Zack himself remarked that he *could* be home with his family or in countless other places in his business, so we should take full advantage of having his time. We were not completely naïve. We understood that he would derive some benefit from helping us. This concept would be constantly reinforced over the next 9½ years: “No one makes more money off your business for your efforts than you.”

The specific example normally used to illustrate this was that of the 4% bonus. Specifically, when you help someone in your organization do 7500 PV, they “go Direct” and are getting paid 25% on the bonus scale. You then receive a leadership bonus of 4% of that distributor’s personal group volume for having helped build it. Since you yourself are probably also doing 7500 PV, you are receiving your own 25% bonus on all goods and services that go through your business. Your sponsor is being paid the additional 4% leadership bonus as well. Again, it was clear that no one made more money off your efforts than you. You would receive a 25% bonus from the goods and services that went through your business and your sponsor would receive 4% for assisting.

The 4% leadership bonus was referenced countless times to illustrate one of the greatest fundamental principles that drove The Business. Your upline would *never* give you bad advice, because it would adversely affect their income to do so. Your upline had what was continually referred to as a “vested interest” in the success of your business. It directly benefited them to give you good advice. They became like a new family that you could trust without reserve. Several standard analogies were commonly used to show how very different the advice was you were likely to receive in the “real world.” One of the most commonly used analogies was that of the insurance/investment broker. Distributors were instructed to be wary of advice they might receive from a broker, because “you may end up ‘broker’ if you listen.” The reason was simple. They were compensated on a transaction basis, simply for making the sale, and not upon the quality of advice given.

The wealthy distributors in Amway who would act as your advisers were more interested in your long-term success, because it was of mutual benefit. My skeptical auditor’s nature was overruled by the pure simplicity of the compensation plan. I have always been good with numbers. Math feels safe to me. It cannot lie and has no emotion. Clearly, my support team would not benefit unless they helped Patty and me succeed financially in Amway. This understanding was also the source of tremendous personal inspiration for us as well. We would only stand to gain *after* helping our friends prosper in their own businesses. It truly was a win/win situation — or so it seemed.

We became very busy helping our other distributors as the day of Zack’s meeting drew closer. The instruction regarding the necessity for exact duplication had been quite

clear. This business was very much like a franchise and to try something “new” would not be a good idea. Why reinvent the wheel? People who had successfully built this business for over two decades had already established a system or pattern for success. Using the same pack of follow-up information, we helped our people invite their friends to the meeting. Some did much better than others on the phone, but overall the results seemed very good. The momentum was already beginning to build, as the people we had sponsored now had others interested in looking at The Business. You could see the excitement in their eyes as they began to believe this could also work for them.

Our sponsors, Kerry and Chris, came to our home about an hour before the 8 p.m. meeting. With Zack coming, they both seemed incredibly nervous about everything being just right, making coffee and preparing Amway-brand snacks to be served after the meeting. The “plan” would be shown on a whiteboard and easel that had to be placed away from the door, so that latecomers would not interrupt the speaker. Children and pets were not to be in or near the meeting area, in order to preserve a professional atmosphere.

As I was the host for the evening, I was given very specific coaching of how to introduce the speaker. We were advised that since I had a great deal of credibility among my distributors and their friends, *I* should introduce Zack by speaking of his success. This would transfer my credibility to him. This made sense to me, as Zack was a stranger to almost everyone who would be present that evening. Patty and I were the only ones who had gone to a big seminar and seen him onstage. We were the ones who could realize just how many people he was helping.

Once again, the GETTING STARTED literature from the follow-up pack was used. These were the guidelines that distributors were to follow, whether or not they even knew the speaker. (It also pre-supposed the often-false notion that the speaker had made any money at all in the Amway business.) The literature gave the following instructions:

“DURING THE MEETING

- A. Introduction – Introducing the speaker is one of the most vital parts of the meeting. It sets the correct atmosphere, gives the speaker and the business credibility and allows the host to convey his conviction, commitment, and enthusiasm towards the business. Remember people will be watching you! A good sample introduction is as follows: “Okay folks, we are ready to get started... I’m glad everyone could be here tonight. We are fortunate to have with us a good friend and business associate (speaker) who has driven here from (city, state) at his own expense to discuss a business concept that (spouse) and I are very excited about and in which we intend to be successful. (Speaker) has been very successful in the business and I recommend you give him your undivided attention as he explains it tonight. So, without further delay, I’ll turn it over to (speaker) and let him get started.”
- B. Be alert and show enthusiasm. Take notes during the meeting. Have a cassette recorder ready to record the presentation.”¹

¹ GETTING STARTED literature from Follow-Up Pack

Much later in The Business, we learned people would do business with others they knew, liked, and trusted. That technique certainly helped create the desired atmosphere.

People began to show up about a half-hour early. Unbeknownst to us, some other distributors had been invited to our home and buzzed with excitement about getting that close to Zack. Once again, it seemed as if others' enthusiasm for Zack nearly bordered on **worship**. In my mind, this attitude was somewhat naïve. I was enthusiastic from a business perspective. To me, having Zack there to teach our fledgling group was a tremendous business coup. It was like starting a new fast-food franchise and having Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald's, there to train you and your partners.

The house filled to capacity with people. It truly was an exciting time. To my surprise, Zack arrived almost 15 minutes late. I expressed concern over this to Kerry, and he advised me that most of the people in the room **should** be willing to wait for hours, if necessary, to get the information they were going to receive from Zack. Once again, I got the message that it was not okay to question upline.

Zack arrived in his new Mercedes and parked in the space reserved for him directly in front of our house. Just as at the previous meeting we had attended, it seemed like we were entertaining a visiting dignitary or head of state. We again felt blessed that someone of this stature would come and help us.

Despite all the fanfare, Zack Walters was again very warm and engaging. He met quite a few of the new people, greeted them with a warm handshake, and learned their names. When he came over to Patty and me, he greeted us by name and complimented us on our nice home. Zack had a warm and winning smile and completely focused eye contact when he listened to others speak. He had the uncanny ability to make each person feel comfortable almost immediately. Meeting with him in person made you almost feel as if you were being reunited with a long-lost friend.

After some friendly conversation, he let me know it was time to start our meeting. I was not a public speaker by any stretch of the imagination. As a matter of fact, it was something I truly dreaded. To make matters worse, the crowd had grown to the point where we had to carry furniture out of the room to have enough space for people to stand and listen to Zack. I got up, nervously, and gave my well-rehearsed introduction.

I sat down and immediately started my tape recorder. After all, I had been told that it was the best students who became wealthy in this business. As a standard practice, Amway distributors were encouraged to take notes and tape these opportunity meetings, counseling sessions, training sessions, and seminars. We were hungry for every word of guidance and advice we could get. This was just like a franchise. We could not afford to miss anything, so I taped the best of the best and studied every tape. I memorized the jokes they used to set audiences at ease. I learned a large number of analogies that could be used to effectively communicate several vital points in the Amway sales plan. Figuring this was a shortcut to success, I taped nearly 200 hours of income representations, training, and counseling with my upline. I would not know for nearly a decade how desperately vital these tapes were to become.

The presentation of the plan went well. Zack's down-home humor and stories set everyone at ease. The pattern of how to show the plan was becoming more and more clear. The speaker would usually share anecdotes of struggles they had endured prior to Amway. Then it was explained they had been unknowingly taught to fail. Specifically, strategies that had once worked for our grandparents no longer applied in the economy of

our day. The old school of thought was that a good education would get you a good job. Nowadays, there are many people with college degrees who cannot even find a job in their field. Many who do secure good jobs later find themselves either laid off or stuck in a dead-end position. Most are not adequately prepared for retirement, as evidenced by the Social Security Administration figures revealing that 95% of Americans are either dead, dead broke, or still working at retirement age. (We did not see documentation of this from the Social Security Administration, but this was routinely referenced as fact.)

It was explained that the irony we faced in the economy was a typical statement that went something like this: “Today, we may find that the A student (an educator) teaches the B student to work for the C student (who now owns a business because he was not “smart enough” to get a job). Because he was not smart enough to get a job, he is now a wealthy business owner employing quite a few well-educated, smart-but-broke people.” Usually, the speakers threw in a few horror stories of people who had been laid off in their 40s or 50s. This steered us to the inevitable conclusion that entrepreneurship, or personal business ownership, was clearly the key to both personal and financial success. Just as we had grasped this, we were informed that not all businesses were good businesses. Some business owners were actually owned by their business instead of vice versa. With traditional businesses normally came enormous overhead and the stresses that came along with employees. The bigger a traditional business grew, the more headaches it normally created for the owner.

Over and over again, we heard the story of a business owner who lost his business and his home at the same time. It was a business tragedy followed by a personal tragedy. Normal or traditional businesses required a large investment and also a commensurate level of risk.

By contrast, Amway had all the benefits of business ownership with almost none of the detractors. **There was no overhead.** Speakers often held up their briefcases and said, “This is my overhead, and there is nothing to lose... if you left your briefcase here, that is more than you can lose in this business.”* As there were no employees, there was no employee theft. There could be no theft in a closed system.

The speakers often referred to making \$2,000 or more a month within three to nine months. “This could be done on a very limited, part-time basis.” The most common representation of the time required to create this size income was 12 to 15 hours a week. It only meant giving up “TV time” a few nights a week, while your children were sleeping. The most common financial reference used repeatedly in The Business presentation was a 2-to-5-year plan. The financial reward that could be gained in this period of time was usually described as “a strong six-figure income” or simply “financial freedom.” In describing the specific time frame for success within this opportunity, Amway Diamond Barry Joye said, “This business will work. It is not a 2-to-5-week plan. It is not a 2-to-5-day plan. It’s a 2-to-5-year plan to **total** financial freedom.”² (In the background on this tape, Amway Double Diamond Brig Hart says “Amen” in agreement.) I knew it would take a tremendous amount of hard work. However, I would be willing to be a humble student and work incredibly hard for two to five years to provide my family with economic freedom. After experiencing the heartbreak of my parents’ divorce, it was my family, not the money, that motivated me.

* Often-repeated representation

² DBR-769 *Your Next Move* audiotape, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

Enticement

*"Most people still believe that America is the land of the free, but things are changing. America has become a nation that as often as not protects the freedom to do evil as much as the freedom to do good because we no longer know the difference."**

— Dr. Walter Martin

Perhaps the greatest selling factor for both Patty and me, and also the thousands of people we ended up bringing into Amway, was the “fact” that we could create ongoing, residual, “will-able” income. This concept differentiated Amway from any other business opportunity. Our business would grow as we helped other independent business owners succeed in owning their own business. We would all be very motivated to work hard and would never “fire ourselves” or “lay ourselves off,” since we **owned** The Business. It was a wonderful paradox. The larger our income became, the more free time we would have to spend with our families.

From a logical standpoint, this appeared to be a business whose time had come. Despite all the labor- and time-saving devices we have, we seem to be getting busier and busier as a society. Success is no longer solely defined by financial affluence. This was also addressed in the plan. Many speakers would ask if the audience knew anyone who worked 60 hours or more a week at a job or business and succeeded, only to lose his family in the process. That price was far too high to pay. This rare and unique business opportunity could provide financial security for the family, but, most importantly, it would give us time to be with the people we loved the most. For the first time in my life, I felt as if I were in the right place at the right time.

The distributors and guests at our house the first night Zack was our guest speaker seemed very interested in owning their own businesses. Kerry and Chris had been right. We had been tremendously fortunate to have Zack come, “at his own expense,” and assist us in getting our business off the ground.

We utilized the guidelines that were provided, and ended with some personal reflections regarding our sincere interest in building our own business as well as helping them succeed in theirs. There was tremendous energy in the room as the meeting broke up, and people began to get snacks and ask questions. Kerry made sure everyone knew that Zack had been kind enough to stay later to go over some important details with those who were already involved or seriously interested in The Business.

Zack informed us that “Direct Distributors” made around \$25,000 a year, and he and Molly had helped thousands of people earn over \$2,000 a month. What a thrill it was to get advice from someone who clearly had the answers! Part of success, he explained, was the need for humility. Years ago, despite his having a college education, he realized

* Martin, Walter, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Bethany House, Oct. 1977 Anniversary Edition, p. xxvii

that he needed to go to Dexter Yager for advice. Dexter only had a high school degree, but he had wisdom. Dexter had business experience. One slogan heard often was, “A man with experience is never at the mercy of a man with an opinion.” As The Business progressed, I would often hear Zack say, *“I’d rather be humble and wealthy than brilliant and broke.”* The secret to success was incredibly simple. *“If you want to succeed, find someone who has become successful and do what they do.”* It is the basic concept of modeling. If you do what I do, you will have what I have. If we would humble ourselves enough to follow the advice of the wealthy distributors who were willing to advise us, success was assured.

In the teaching session, Zack made it clear to all of us how fortunate we were to be working with Kerry and Chris. They had already reached the Silver Direct level (7500 PV) that put them in a position to help us move ahead. He built them up as our local leaders. They had become far more successful than we had known. He explained how important the books, tapes, and seminars had been as he developed a large international business. (There was no need to sell me on the tapes, because I was already hooked. They were motivational as well as instrumental in teaching me the fundamentals of this business. I got a tape deck and turned my old, silver, beat-up pick-up truck into a university on wheels.) Zack stated to the group that if we did the following five things, he would guarantee us any level of income we desired from The Business.

- 1. Read at least 15 minutes a day from a book on the “tool list”**
- 2. Listen to a tape every day**
- 3. Attend all functions (seminars, training sessions, etc.)**
- 4. 100% self-use of products in our home**
- 5. Show the plan to people we would like to help**

At the end of the meeting, Zack invited Patty and me back up front to share about the future that we saw in The Business. Once again, we knew what to say from the **GETTING STARTED literature**. Nothing was left to chance. The guidelines for speaking after the meeting were as follows:

“AFTER THE MEETING

- A. After the presentation of the plan, the speaker will invite you, as the hosts, to briefly share what you like best about the opportunity and let everyone know what you expect to accomplish with YOUR BUSINESS.
- B. It is important for the hosts to guide in keeping the conversation on the positive aspects of the business. Keep the questions on the positive side i.e.: “What did you like best?” “Looks real good, doesn’t it?” “Now you can see why I’m excited!”

Objections are positive signs of interest. Here are three proven ways to handle them: Using the feel, felt, found method. ‘I know how you feel.

I felt the same way, but this is what I found’.”³

That seemed simple enough. All we needed to do to succeed in our Amway businesses was learn the pattern and teach it. During the announcements that followed, Patty and I were glad to hear there was a seminar coming up soon. We had gone to see the Dexter Yager seminar alone. The enthusiasm, excitement, and hope we experienced there was contagious. This time, we would be going with a small group of *our* people. Little did we know that the organization to develop from this handful of friends would one day literally span the globe.

Seductive Poison

“In business, [the desire to control others] is often expressed in advertising that entices people to want what they do not need and to buy what they cannot afford.”*

— Derek Prince

We were building The Business at an unusually fast pace, but did not know it, as we had no point of reference. We went “1000” our first full month in The Business. This means the organization we were developing did 1000 PV or roughly \$2200 in business.

We drove to the next seminar early with Kerry and Chris. One or two carloads of our people were to come down at the regular seminar time. Seminars were traditionally held on Saturdays. Meetings ran from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m., with a break for dinner, and then from 8 p.m. until 11 p.m. Our early arrival was due to the fact that Kerry and Chris achieved the magical 7500 PV level (referred to by distributors as “Direct”), and they had to attend the “Directs’ meeting” which took place prior to each seminar.

This was a source of tremendous motivation for Patty and me, because the speakers would give the “Directs” very specific coaching on how to build an even larger, more prosperous business. We hated waiting outside those closed-door meetings. Some of the speakers had actually retired in their late 20s or early 30s. It was clear to us that the keys to our family’s financial future were in that room.

Everything that happened at the seminar did so according to a very specific pattern, which soon became quite familiar to us. Once again, we were surrounded by a highly enthusiastic, well-dressed group of men and women. Almost every one of them was upbeat, happy, and smiling. There were quite a few people greeting one another with hugs and warm handshakes. The atmosphere was almost electric. One of the Direct couples got up on stage to open the seminar. They were greeted with applause and a few sporadic hoots and cheers. The mood turned suddenly somber, as they led in a prayer for the speakers, for each of us, and for the country. (Even though Patty and I were both Christians, praying seemed oddly out of place in a business meeting.)

The microphone was then turned over to another popular Direct husband-and-wife team. They, too, were greeted with warm applause and cheers. They said something,

³ GETTING STARTED literature from Follow-Up Pack

* Prince, Derek, *They Shall Expel Demons*, Chosen Books, 1998, p.138

(which I cannot remember or did not understand) which caused the audience to explode into applause and then a standing ovation. Most everyone started a slow rhythmic clapping while they chanted, "**Fired up! Fired up! Fired up!**" This group behavior was bizarre and made both of us very uneasy. It seemed very much out of place for a business-training seminar. When the crowd settled down, the couple on stage led in the pledge to the American flag. This, too, seemed somewhat out of place, even though we considered ourselves patriotic. I was beginning to feel embarrassed that we had brought people to this. I remember thinking, "Perhaps this is an aberration." We could only hope. We had gone there to learn the logistics of how to build a successful Amway wholesaling business, as had our friends. Since our sponsors were our ride home, we could not leave. We truly were a captive audience.

The next couple was brought up and identified as our hosts for the day. They were well spoken and professional, thank goodness. They spoke of our speakers, Bob and Wendy,* with the highest regard. Wendy had already retired, and Bob was going to shortly. They both were in their late 20s or early 30s. Now they had my attention. Bob and Wendy came on stage to a thunderous ovation. There was still an excited atmosphere, but Bob quickly set the tone for the afternoon. He spoke briefly of their introduction to The Business, their early struggles, and their current success. He spoke of Wendy with a great deal of compassion and respect. He introduced her as his partner and the love of his life. Bob gave her a quick peck on the cheek as he handed her the microphone. It was obvious they had a great marriage. Wendy spoke of Bob with admiration and described him as their children's hero. This all seemed a little surrealistic, but at the same time, it seemed like they had succeeded in areas of life that were important to us.

Wendy spoke almost solely on the woman's role in The Business. The women took the orders by telephone on a certain night and organized the products for pickup a few days later. We would receive orders from the people we had sponsored. These orders would be compiled on one order sheet and then called in to our sponsor. The ladies were encouraged to go to meetings, training sessions, and seminars with their husbands. After all, it would be far better to be out for a few hours a couple of nights a week than have a full-time job and someone else raising your children, wouldn't it?

She reinforced some of the language/terms specific to this business. Your upline was your sponsor and everyone above them in your line of sponsorship. Your downline was everyone you sponsored and the people below them. People who were not in your upline or downline were considered "cross line" to you. She also stressed the importance of the books and tapes for the women. The system allowed for growth in many areas. It helped build your confidence, interpersonal skills, and beliefs. After using about one-third of the allotted time, Wendy brought Bob back on with an enthusiastic introduction.

Bob literally took control of the room. He opened with some down-home style jokes. His warm, confident smile and slightly self-deprecating humor made him a very easy person to like. He was one of *us* who had made it. He wasn't slick, nor was he a backslapping salesman. Patty and I were in awe of this young couple on stage. They were not much older than us, and yet they had a confidence rarely found in people twice their age. Men and women, representing many successful vocations, were around me taking notes and listening intently to this young, successful speaker. He spoke of many things that were now becoming familiar to us. The books, the tapes, and the seminars (which

* Not their real names

were referred to as “functions”) were collectively known as *the system*. The system obviously was the key to succeeding, as every speaker made specific mention of it.

Over time, we discovered that the success of the system is probably one of the most frequently promoted topics. The representations made regarding the system are typified by the following comments made by an Amway Emerald at a teaching session after a large meeting in a hotel:

“I teach ... I don’t let people in (Amway) unless they agree to the system.” ...

“To me it is very cut and dry. The success rate in the system is 100%, the success rate out of the system is zero... you probably don’t believe that answer right away... and so I’m going to tell you this. There is not one person that I have ever seen that listens to a tape a day, reads a chapter in a book every day, does not miss a function, and shows the plan at least three times a week, and he does that continuously for somewhere between two and five years, that does not make a six-figure income”⁴

The Amway Emerald hosting the meeting affirmed the statement by saying:

“I think you were a little soft on it, but going in the right direction.... That’s good... 100% in, 0% out... That’s that... period.”⁵

The last topic Bob discussed was “showing the plan,” Amway lingo for making the presentation. It was also referred to as “drawing the circles,” due to the many circles you would draw out to represent each distributor in the organization when you showed the plan. It did not matter what products you had or how good the system was if you were not out showing the plan to people. This was the work, if you can call it that. It was so incredibly simple. We could hardly wait for the dinner break to be able to talk with our friends about the seminar. Each one of our friends seemed as excited as we were.

As we left the seminar, we noticed most of the Directs were getting into nice-looking luxury cars. Many were climbing into well-polished Cadillacs, and one young single Direct got into a BMW. It was obvious there were young people making some very good money in this business. We could not wait to get back home to get to work. I thought of a few more people to contact and wrote their names down in the margin of my seminar notes. I wished I had called them earlier so they could have been here with us.

The night session had a whole different format. It opened up with all of the Direct couples on stage with Bob and Wendy. We were told this was the awards ceremony to honor the achievers. Our sponsors made certain we were ready to go up. The first award was for the “Eagle Club” qualifiers. The crowd in attendance was told that over 90% of the people who qualified as “Eagle” would end up going Direct. Now these were the

⁴ Amway Distributor Leader 02/16/99 Open Recruitment Meeting at Hotel

⁵ Amway Emerald (Kerry) 02/16/99 Open Recruitment Meeting at Hotel

specific logistics I had come for. Kerry and Chris would soon give us an Eagle Club sheet we could fill out as we went along. Eagle Club qualification would take some work, but it was relatively simple. To go Eagle, you had to do several things in a 90-day time frame. We needed to personally sponsor five distributorships and ten more in depth (beneath the five). The rest was basically following the system. We needed to read daily from a book on the tool list and purchase the weekly standing-order tape series. Additionally, we were to attend all functions (seminars) for which we qualified and must have 100% self-use of products in our home. We had come ready to run fast. We just wanted to know what direction to go in. The Business system was giving us a track to run on.

A couple who had just gone Eagle were brought up on stage and recognized with an enthusiastic applause. They were going to be the next Directs. Our sponsors, Kerry and Chris, were given the microphone and they welcomed the new 1000 pins. Once again, we were unfamiliar with the semantics of The Business. We later learned that each new level of achievement in The Business was referred to as a “pin” or “pin level,” due to the fact that you are given a small pin, for recognition, to wear on your lapel. We were brought up on stage and greeted warmly by each Direct couple. Our sponsors held the microphone in front of us (non-Directs are not allowed to hold the microphone) and asked our names, where we lived, and how long we had been in The Business. The crowd broke into an excited roar when we told them we had been in The Business for just over a month. We had no way of knowing that this was unusually rapid growth. We would later work with couples for almost a year to help them accomplish the same goal. Being on the stage made us nervous, but, at the same time, it made us feel good about ourselves. The goal now was to return to a seminar and have **ALL** of our people be recognized onstage.

The excitement grew as each new pin level was announced and recognized. Couples paraded proudly onto the stage to be recognized at the levels of 2500, 4000, and 7500 (PV). Some of the comments were as follows: “Now they’re making enough to really make their neighbors mad!” There were a **lot** of people making money in this business. The proof was on the stage. Some of the Direct men spoke of buying their first Cadillac and of their wife’s retirement. The Directs on stage were impeccably dressed and all looked like very successful professionals.

Owning a Cadillac was nothing that interested us, but being in a position to keep Patty home with our baby, Adam, *was* of tremendous importance. The awards ceremony was completed, and the hosts for the day invited Bob and Wendy back up to the podium to accept a gift. Bob and Wendy were sincerely thanked for taking a day out of their lives and away from their children to come and teach us about The Business. Their wisdom had been greatly appreciated. Then they proceeded to unwrap the gift, a beautiful plaque from Walters International with their names engraved on it.

The Directs moved off stage to their reserved seats on the front row. This was another perk of being Direct. The rest of us had had to wait outside in a crowded room like cattle until the doors opened. A mad rush to the front seats followed. As we were often reminded, the *best students* got there early, took notes, tape recorded everything, and stayed late.

The night session was much more casual in nature. This was not a teaching time per se, but a time for the speakers to share their stories. This session, in Amway lingo, was referred to as “the rally.” It took awhile to learn this new language! The speakers each made brief references to their lives prior to becoming involved in this business.

Most of the evening centered around how the speakers were sponsored into Amway as well as their initial thoughts and apprehensions.

Most of the speakers at these seminars would focus on the many intangible benefits The Business had provided. Almost all had improved in areas such as goal setting, time management, and communication. Nearly all gave credit to The Business and the system for the wonderful marriages they now enjoyed. Most of the men spoke of their wives with tremendous pride, gratitude, and respect. Being in The Business was not just a great financial opportunity but also a means by which you could improve every aspect of your life. The women would speak of their husbands with a reflective level of admiration and would comment on how thankful they were to be married to a **real man**. These men were heroes in their own homes — men of integrity who were good providers.

A Godly Business

“From the very beginning... Rich and I sought to run our sales organization according to biblical principles of integrity, faithfulness, and truthfulness... A business without integrity will be penalized in the marketplace.”*

— Amway Co-Founder Jay Van Andel

Something stirred deep within me. I would have given anything to have Patty feel that way about me. Several of the speakers gave praise, thanks, and glory to their Lord Jesus Christ. These professions of faith in a business setting made us somewhat uneasy. The children of distributors appeared to be the greatest benefactors. We learned almost all of the women at the Direct Distributor level (referred to as “Directs”) were stay-at-home moms. This was an option we had wanted to exercise until our children were of school age. Patty had a degree in preschool education and was looking into courses at a local college. These courses would enable her to get her BA in elementary education with her teaching certificate and allow her to fulfill her dream of being a grade-school teacher, once our children were all in school.

We learned that all the Diamonds and the distributors at the “Emerald” level were retired, had become full-time parents, and were making at least \$100,000 a year. This would be a dream come true for me, having grown up in a family that had not survived the many stresses of life. At the core of my being, I felt I had to be able to provide financial security for my family. To be able to accomplish this and have unlimited time with Patty and Adam would be a blessing I could barely comprehend.

There still were small fears and apprehensions, but the more I was in the system, the more comfortable I became. It was a relief to hear that, early on, many of the Amway leaders had felt exactly as we did now as new distributors. Many of the speakers also had the preconception that Amway was a soap-selling business. We were all relieved to be in what was described as “Phase Three” of Amway — the network marketing phase. The

* Jay Van Andel from *An Enterprising Life*

evolution of Amway was well described in *The Business Handbook*, which was written by Dexter Yager and his son, Doyle. The description they gave was as follows:

“During 1959 and continuing through the 1960s, **Phase One** of this new phenomenon began, primarily in the form of direct sales. The company, with a relatively small number of pioneering distributors and a limited number of well received products, did \$500,000 in sales the first year. By the end of the decade, sales reached over \$300 million.

Looking back, we now see that **Phase Two** began emerging during the 1970s as a new term was added — “multi-level marketing” — which emphasized the long term aspects of building organizational depth. Distributors began to recognize the additional security through this new business dimension.

During the early 1980s, not only did Amway’s retail sales cross the \$1 billion mark and we started exporting our marketing method to other countries, we moved into a new phase. With the introduction of numerous corporate products and services (beginning with the Amway/MCI efforts) into the system, **Phase Three** heralded the advance of network marketing — building on the then-new concept of networking, as prefaced in John Naisbett’s *Megatrends*. Corporate America and Wall Street began awakening to the power of network marketing and began knocking on Amway’s door.”⁶

This development explained why preconceptions had caused some people to have a negative, if not hostile, reaction to even the mention of the word “Amway.” This was no longer a soap-selling business at all! The mentorship program was essential for our success as well as for those we were to assist. My sponsor would show the plan for us until I was proficient. Patty and I were very thankful he was willing to do this for us until I could come up to speed. We were very hungry students. It was clear to us that the best students, in turn, became the best teachers. Whoever helped or taught many people to succeed in this business would then prosper as a by-product of this servant hood. In a *Forbes* article, Amway co-founder Rich DeVos is quoted as defining his company by stating, “Amway is more than just a company; it’s a movement to help people help themselves.”⁷

The “people helping people” aspect was the main philosophy that attracted us to this business. This inspired Patty and me as much as The Business being founded and built upon principles, values, faith, and integrity. This was far different from anything we had ever experienced in the corporate world.

It made us proud to be associated in business with people of obvious integrity. Most of the many Diamonds’ speeches we heard were reflective of these principles. The Business was based upon a seemingly solid foundation, and it worked! This was evidenced clearly by the lavish lifestyles displayed in the book *Profiles of Success* and in

⁶ *The Business Handbook*, Dexter R. Yager, Sr. with Doyle Yager, p. 68

⁷ *Forbes*, December 9, 1991, Klebnikov

videos of the same title.

The credibility of The Business seemed to grow in tandem with Amway's escalating multi-billion-dollar global annual sales. We occasionally received photocopies of Amway bonus checks that members of our upline had deposited. One set of these checks came from Zack and Molly Walters. There were six checks that came in over a two-month period. The grand total of these checks was just over \$166,000. Another set we received came from Dexter Yager and his wife, Birdie. Once again, it was pointed out that these came in during about a two-month time frame and had a cumulative total of over \$2,132,000. This income was for only two months! Zack and other Diamonds later emphatically stated, "Many of you will earn a strong seven-figure income." Several of the Diamonds had their own private jets. Certainly, no one was going to tell us that Amway didn't work. It was working for somebody!

I was doing four out of five activities in the system. The books and the tapes were inspirational. The large group seminars helped us visualize success and picture one day having a large organization. We understood the talks on product loyalty. Over and over again, the distributors heard that "99% loyalty is 100% disloyalty." We had to use **all** of **our own** products. Products purchased outside of Amway were referred to as "negative" products. We were told that distributors would even look in the closets in our bathroom when they were over for meetings. We certainly could not afford to have them find a negative product and think that we did not believe in The Business. There were even little orange "hazardous material" negative-product stickers you could order which had a skull and cross bones across them and said something like, "This product may be hazardous to your PV." One prominent Florida Diamond talked about having negative PV raids on the homes of his downline distributors. It sounded like it was done in fun, but they would actually run through the distributors' houses either labeling or collecting all non-Amway products. This was serious. We purchased the products from "**OUR**" business and, consequently, they were going to lead to our financial freedom. Products like Tide were not going to pay for our kids' college education. Brand loyalty was essential for success.

Products like the vitamins and dog food seemed outrageously expensive. However, we could not afford only 99% loyalty. We were taught that the key to this entire business was duplication. Our group of distributors would duplicate what we did or did not do. We were also advised that our downline distributors would duplicate what we did *wrong* more often than all the things we did right. There certainly would be no negative products found in *our* home. It would be financial suicide to do anything other than use all our own products. It would also show tremendous disrespect to your upline (who was working for you) if they saw negative products in your home. They would think you were not serious about The Business or your future, and they could choose to help someone more committed. Our children would eventually learn to not even ask for any non-Amway-purchased products. They would soon realize that products from **OUR** business were going to bring Mommy and Daddy home and take them to Disney World. This was so simple.

The critical element to success, however, was still missing in our case. Yes, we were listening to the tapes, reading the books, going to the seminars, and using ALL our own products, but I was not yet showing the plan. It didn't matter if we did everything correctly, *if* we had no organization in which to duplicate the proper business building techniques. Kerry would get up and show the plan and let me say a few words at the end.

It took a little while, but, eventually, I studied it long enough to be able to show the plan on my own. When the people we had sponsored finally saw me showing the plan, it gave them the confidence to go out and do it themselves.

Soon, we were moving many Amway kits on a regular basis. Kerry let me know I could not continue borrowing all his tapes indefinitely. I had become a tape junkie from those he had loaned to me early on. Five dollars a week for a cassette seemed like a lot, but I signed up for the standing-order tape program. The tapes would just come automatically with our Amway product order every week. We duplicated this immediately, so that all our distributors would automatically get their tapes and all the information they needed. After all, it only made sense — they had a millionaire on tape teaching them as opposed to me.

Something happened one day at product pick-up that, at first, made me very uncomfortable. I was carrying boxes of tapes and Amway products from my sponsor's basement to my car. As I loaded the last box, Kerry's wife, Chris, smiled and said sweetly, "We love you guys." I smiled and left quickly. They began to tell us this more and more, as did other members of our upline as we got to know them. They told us we were special people and had unlimited potential with the way we were able to relate to people. It seemed strange at first, but it was refreshing to be around a group of people who were so uplifting. Over a period of years, we would eventually become closer to this group than any of our former friends or family.

In mid-December, Kerry and Chris came over and described to us what they said was essentially the opportunity of a lifetime. It was a weekend-long seminar about five hours away. It would be in early January and was called Dream Weekend. There were several reasons we could not go. First, we were feeling overwhelmed! Although we were enthusiastic, our total involvement was moving far too quickly. Second, we had an infant son, Adam, and we were unwilling to leave him for an entire weekend. Third, we did not have the several hundred dollars it was going to cost for the seminar and lodging in the high-end hotel in which it was scheduled. There was just no way it was going to happen. We told them we would catch the next one when our situation was better. Kerry and Chris were very persistent. This was something I would thank them for later.

They explained that Adam was the biggest reason *we needed to go*. His future could hinge on this important seminar. There were millionaires and multi-millionaires who were flying in from all over the country to teach those who "really wanted to learn." Money was tight for us, but after a function like this, it probably would never be a problem again. Being strapped financially was actually another major reason to go and learn from people who were financially free. We could even take Adam with us to the seminar and were encouraged to take food in a big cooler to save money. After hearing all this, we felt like we had no more excuses. All the issues that caused us to not want to go were presented as the biggest reasons we needed to get there. We reluctantly agreed to put the trip on a credit card. This Dream Weekend could actually be what allowed us to become debt free. I internalized their nudging as meaning "invest in yourself now for a brighter financial future." If *I* didn't invest in myself, who else was going to? This concept of investing made sense to me. *There was no way for me to foresee that by utilizing these principles, I would later be used as an unknowing dupe to extract millions of dollars from many, many good people.*

By this time, we had quickly qualified as Eagle. We were well on our way to

Direct. We could convince no one else in our group to attend Dream Weekend with us. That was okay. From the books and tapes, I was beginning to understand how leaders think and act. Leaders lead. With much anticipation, we made the long journey with Adam to the seminar. We arrived at the hotel, checked in, and changed into our meeting clothes — a conservative dress for Patty and the standard suit and tie for me.

The meeting area was an enormous ballroom. I had been to many corporate functions, but had never seen anything of this magnitude. There must have been 2,000 people there. They all seemed very enthusiastic and friendly. It was the most positive, energetic group of people I had ever seen in my life. It was also a group in which you felt very safe. It was almost like a family. Speakers at these seminars often commented on the fact that this was probably the only group where a woman could leave her purse on a chair or table and not worry about it for hours. Things could not have gone better.

We learned that there was special reserved seating right up front for the Directs and new Eagles. We walked from the nosebleed section right up to a table near the stage. We were fortunate enough to be seated with two young Direct couples who gave us tremendous encouragement. They were where we wanted to be someday. They were making at least \$25,000 working only part-time. We thought what a wonderful business this was where people who didn't even know us would give us encouragement! The weekend opened with the traditional prayer and pledge. We were becoming more conditioned to this sort of thing, so that it no longer made us uneasy. As a matter of fact, we were now becoming proud to be part of it. Zack and Molly were the hosts and were greeted with a thunderous ovation immediately upon walking onstage. We were now participants and were standing and clapping with contagious enthusiasm for them. ***We had crossed the line. We were no longer spectators or observers. We were "in." Without our knowledge, an educational indoctrination process had begun that would ultimately alter and control nearly all of our fundamental beliefs.***

The people at our table could not believe how fortunate we were to have had Zack do a meeting for us in our home. They told us of the enormous global empire he had developed. We, too, were slowly beginning to understand how very fortunate we were to be personally working with Zack. There was one perception that was firmly cemented in our minds as we attended the seminar. What was very clear was the euphoric understanding and belief that this business worked and did so in a big way. All of the speakers had come into the Amway business with some misgivings and apprehensions. Many had overcome incredible struggles and were now completely financially free. More importantly, they had no jobs, which meant they had unlimited family time.

A New Line of Reasoning

"We at Empower America are interested in bringing Democracy and freedom and entrepreneurial capitalism to the rest of the world. I've got a great way to do it. If we want

***to bring down Castro and bring down Communism in Cuba...
send them some Amway distributors... that will do it!"****

— Jack Kemp

Up to that point, politics had never been a real issue of interest to me. At this seminar and most that followed, we began to learn about the evils of liberalism and of the Democratic Party. It seemed that the liberals wanted to take from the hardworking, honest producers (us) and give to the lazy, non-productive members of society (them). Even our taxation system was deemed to be incredibly unfair. It seemed that the rich (the producers) paid the great majority of the taxes, which ultimately benefited the lazy members of society who chose not to work. They tried to explain that, logically, there ought to be a tax on the poor. After all, it was the lazy poor who were the ones constantly draining the system that was supported by the hardworking families in America.

It certainly did not seem fair that hardworking families, like ours, supported the third and fourth generations of families that were non-productive by choice. This made me quite angry, once I began to *understand*. I went from having compassion for the poor to contempt for them. This did not happen overnight or over the course of one weekend. This type of information was continually reinforced through tapes, videos, seminars, and training sessions over a period of years.

Unknowingly, distributors tended to develop and embrace a totalitarian we/they or us/them paradigm. This was most clearly evidenced a few years later at another Dream Weekend held in Washington, DC. As chance would have it, another group, called the Rainbow Coalition, was having a seminar at the same location. Jesse Jackson was there to speak or lead the conference. They, too, were a very well-dressed, sharp-looking group of people. Their group also had tables where people could buy books and support materials. In fact, our groups appeared nearly identical with the exception of one clear distinction. They were Black Americans and our group was almost entirely Caucasian. The Diamond leadership had a field day when one of our distributors spotted a book on "their" table for sale. The topic was something to the effect of how to get social security at any age.

This became a topic that several speakers addressed with lots of emotion. Here *we* were teaching people free enterprise, capitalism, self-sufficiency, and the work ethic. It was hard to believe that *they* were in the same building, promoting how to leech off the government and the producers. It was portrayed in a manner that almost made it seem like a battle of good vs. evil, strong vs. weak, or the diligent working vs. the lazy.

At this seminar, we learned of another great evil that had the potential to inflict great harm upon our families and the American family unit in general. It was the National Organization for Women (NOW). We learned that they were trying to redefine the role of women in America. It seemed as if they almost wanted to make women into men. They were described as "Femi-nazis." The exodus of women from the home and into the workplace was actually tearing at the very moral fiber of what made this country strong. Amway Diamonds would often make statements like, "*There is no amount of money that my wife could earn outside of the home that could replace the good she could do for the children within it.*" In a sense, I agreed and still agree with the basic premise of this

* Jack Kemp, *Faith, Family, Freedom & The Future* audiotope, FED 94-7, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

statement. Initially, this was an opinion that Patty and I shared, but it is not a moral yardstick by which we cast judgment on others.

In our Amway experience, women who chose a career “over” their children were deemed to have a lack of values or were considered to be just plain stupid. Distributors would often hear comments like, “Why do you think she’s working, because she hates her kids?” To not openly offend the un-indoctrinated, these types of remarks were often cushioned with a disclaimer such as, “I certainly understand the bad position these women are in. Some are forced into the workplace because they are married to a man who just isn’t a man. I don’t know about you guys, but I did not marry my wife so that she could pay her half of the mortgage.” This would put tremendous pressure upon the men to be “real men,” as defined by *the system*. The well-meaning husbands now had enormous psychological and emotional pressure to build this business aggressively to “bring their wife home” and prove their love, while retaining their manhood. If you could not accomplish this, it would cause long-term psychological self-emasculation. Rescuing your wife from the workplace was something every **man** needed to do — and do quickly.

The Diamond leadership became aware that the National Organization for Women had rented the very same facility for a national conference the next weekend. Once again, we were faced with the conflict of good vs. evil. Who would protect our families? God certainly would if enough of us would rise up. One of the leaders led about 2,000 of us in prayer against the National Organization for Women and its leadership.

The only specific of the prayer I remember clearly was that God was asked to create confusion and dissent at their meeting and among NOW’s leadership. A couple of weeks later, we were joyfully informed that the meeting held by NOW had been a disaster. We were told that the president had announced she was a lesbian, and there was a massive power outage in the middle of their conference. Certainly, God had answered all of our prayers and had provided protection for all of us who loved our families.

Another great evil we had been unaware of was organized labor. Distributors were advised that unions generally used their clout to actually protect non-productive people and reward them with a high pay scale. This was one of the great problems with America and one of the reasons we, as a nation, may have had challenges in competing in a global marketplace. The “union mentality” was a subject of constant derision at seminars and training sessions. We were told this was one of the reasons for the extremely high costs of putting on a major seminar. *The American people “needed to be educated” on some of the fundamental principles of capitalism for the country to remain strong and survive.*

The “entitlement attitude” that unions allegedly maintained was very harmful to our country. There were countless references to lazy people who made statements like “that’s not my job.” Complaints were voiced that “a lot of people seem to stop looking for work right after they get a job.” We needed to develop the strong work ethic, teach it to our children, and duplicate it throughout the country to make our nation strong once again. Distributors were advised that unions wanted to extract unlimited income from companies without any corresponding effort or benefit. This type of attitude could bankrupt companies and be the downfall of free enterprise.

It was presented that perhaps the worst of these unions was the National Education Association (NEA). This, allegedly, was a group determined to subvert our family values and Christian beliefs in general. It was another liberal group that reportedly used its clout to do many bad things. First, it wanted to protect its poor teachers and non-

producers by allowing them to hide behind tenure. If they were not good teachers, they should be fired! Forget tenure! This was not socialism or communism, which were topics they were freely teaching our children. Distributors were also advised that teachers in this liberal system had free rein to teach our children homosexuality, sex education, and even Satanism, despite our wishes.

Once again, this set of beliefs was not created in one day or over one weekend. This paradigm was developed and nurtured in many tapes, seminars, and training sessions. Occasionally, a public school teacher in the organization would talk about some of these topics from firsthand experience. This caused us to not only fear public education, but also, eventually, to view it almost as a form of child abuse. As our family grew, we finally enrolled our children in a small Christian school to insulate them from this evil. Other distributors did the same or chose to homeschool.

Early on, the prayer and the pledge and all of this education about politics and unions seemed out of place in a business meeting. It was explained that we needed to be very knowledgeable in these areas to be able to vote correctly. A well-placed vote would protect the future we were working so hard to build. Distributors were encouraged to do more than just vote; they were also to contribute financially to the campaigns of those conservative Republicans who were brought in to speak to us. It did not matter if they were not from our home state, as we were urged to get them into office in order to get the whole country right. We were thankful that our leadership had more concern for us than simply our financial success. It was refreshing to be around people who truly wanted to have their lives make a difference in the world. Once again, *Forbes* seemed to have a firm grasp on this movement when it reported:

In a world where many people find little satisfaction in the paychecks they receive from big companies or public agencies, such visions of financial independence are often compelling. But Amway goes a crucial step beyond mere money. It offers its recruits membership in a community of like-minded people — entrepreneurial, motivated, upwardly mobile people who believe in their country, in God and in their family. “This country was built on a religious heritage, and we had better get back to it. We had better start telling people that faith in God is the real strength of America!” Richard DeVos writes in his book *Believe!*⁸

We left our first Dream Weekend with total confidence in the knowledge that this was a good and honorable business and that we could succeed. More importantly, we could help our family and friends succeed in the process. Again and again, these words were used to reinforce the all-for-one and one-for-all propaganda: “A rising tide raises all ships.”

“There are three ways the desire to control others expresses itself: manipulation, intimidation and domination.”
*

⁸ *Forbes*, December 9, 1991, Klebnikov

* Prince, Derek, *They Shall Expel Demons*, Choice Books, 1998, p. 137

— Derek Prince

Fully Committed

“Amway distributors are dramatic proof that the American spirit of free enterprise is, and will continue to be, a vibrant force for good at home and around the world.”*

— Gerald R. Ford, 38th President of the United States

We came home from the Dream Weekend seminar with a euphoric mixture of motivation and exhaustion. Some of the meetings had gone until past 1 a.m. The odd part was that almost no one got up and walked out, even after midnight. Others must have been used to this. We did not yet have that kind of endurance. What we lacked in endurance, though, we made up for with work.

Soon, I was doing one-on-one presentations and group house-meetings almost every night. The numbers began to grow rapidly. It was not long until we had our own “open meeting” in our town. This proved a tremendous advantage in furthering the growth of our organization. In an open meeting, a very successful distributor would show the plan on a large board and easel in the ballroom of a local hotel. This was a very professional setting and added to the credibility of our now rapidly expanding business. The open meeting was held once a month and was presented by either an Amway Profit Sharing Direct-, Emerald-, or Diamond-level distributor.

This terminology of the various levels requires some definition and description. A Profit Sharing Direct was a distributor who had maintained 7500 PV for six months in the fiscal year. An Emerald Distributor had not only achieved the level of Profit Sharing but had helped at least three of his downline distributors accomplish this as well. We were informed that Emerald Distributors made at least \$100,000 a year. Most were able to retire at this level. The standard repeated slogan was “three you’re free, six you’re rich.” Diamond Distributors were those who had helped at least six different distributor organizations reach the level of Profit Sharing in a fiscal year. We were told that the lowest representation of income at this level was normally around \$250,000 a year.

It certainly was a thrill to have many young, financially free distributors show the plan and teach us and the “leaders” we had sponsored. The most important part of these meetings was the *nuts-and-bolts* teaching sessions after the prospects had left the room. As distributors, we could write questions on a piece of paper and pass them forward to be answered by the guru *du jour*.

We “went Direct” in a little under a year. This certainly was an exciting time! The real thrill was not for us to be recognized on stage, but to see distributors in our group brought up and recognized at each new level. When Patty and I went Direct, it gave all of our friends the hope that they could do it, too. A renewed, high-energy level rolled

* Take Charge of Your Future; Stock No. SA-217, Copyright 1997, Amway Corporation

through the organization, as it began to pick up momentum. We now had an open invitation to all of the Direct meetings. We got there early with notebooks and tape recorder and stayed late. Here we began to meet the Emeralds and Diamonds we had only known from a distance. We *felt* as if we had known many of them intimately from listening to all of their tapes. We wanted to know what they knew, and we wanted to have the family-oriented lifestyles they described.

The teaching at this level became far more streamlined. We had heard many times about the Cardinal Rules, but they were repeatedly hammered home at this level. “**The Cardinal Rules,**” distributors were advised, “**were rules that you must *never, never, never, never, ever violate.***” It sounded a little hardcore, but Direct-level distributors were advised that violating any of these principles could cause significant damage to even a large organization. At lower levels, these rules were important, but at the leadership level, they were as vital as water is to life. Our upline Diamond shared these principles with us solely to assist us in protecting what we were working hard to build.

“When a movement requires you to lose your identity, most times the movement is a cult.”²

— Billy Hornsby

Never Pass Negative

The first Cardinal Rule is that a distributor should never speak negative words. You were not to talk negatively about a situation, a person, or product. My firsthand experience with this came fairly early on in The Business. Kerry and Chris had given us a chocolate food-bar to try that had come from The Business. The next time I saw them, they asked what I had thought about it. In **my** mind, that meant I was supposed to give them an honest opinion. I told them it tasted okay, but it seemed grossly overpriced. They smiled and did not really make any comment at that time.

In a week or so, we had a training session for the group. One of their talks was on the topic of “never passing negative.” Specifically, if you do not like a product or feel it may be pricey, don’t ever speak it. Why? Because someone in your group may like it and may determine, by their standards, that it is reasonably priced. This business was predicated upon successful duplication, and if everyone spoke about the one product they did not particularly like, a new distributor might get a poor impression of the product line. I understood the strong message, and on the surface, it actually seemed to make sense.

There were **never** any “problems.” There were only “challenges” and “opportunities for growth.” If there ever was a challenge in the group, you were never to discuss it with downline. We could take the limited time we had with our people to either give them words of encouragement or discouragement. It was only productive to take challenges *upline* for discussion and resolution. There was never a need to burden someone with a challenge that did not affect them personally. One of the common sayings used to illustrate this very important principle was, “*Remember to only ‘throw up, never*

² Hornsby, Billy, *The Cell Driven Church*, Kingdom Publishing, December 2000

down.’’ In a family, there were challenges a father and mother handled without the children’s knowledge, but for the children’s own benefit. This was very much the same.

Even more important than never speaking negative words was the policy of never thinking negative thoughts. It was important to have enough discipline never to allow your mind to entertain a negative or doubtful thought. Why was this so important? It was simple.

We were taught that by nature we moved in the direction of our most dominant thought. One of the most valuable things I learned from Zack and quoted often was this: *“Your actions will follow your thoughts, just as surely as your shadow follows you.”* He spoke often of the vital importance of controlling your environment. That was brilliant! If our actions gained directional control by our thoughts, the key to success was this: We simply had to have enough self-discipline to control our most dominant thoughts. That was why the system had been so essential to the success of all those who had gone before us. It helped to maintain focus and also block out the negative.

This information helped us block out the ridiculous stories we would hear about people who came into Amway and left after losing their homes, going bankrupt, or having \$5,000 worth of soap in their garage. Diamonds finished those stories by saying “if a guy lost his shirt in Amway, it must have been a pretty cheap shirt.” As distributors, we often laughed among ourselves at the idiots who would believe and repeat such stupid stories. Little did we know that we also would eventually be forced into bankruptcy and face losing our own home.

Never De-Edify

“...the cults almost invariably teach their followers not to question, not to interact with outsiders (especially ones critical of the cult’s beliefs) and to depend on the cult authority structure to tell them what to believe without any personal reflection at all.”*

— Dr. Walter Martin

The second Cardinal Rule was that a distributor should always *edify*, or build up, his or her upline. The more you built up your upline verbally, the more effective they would become in working in your group. It could only benefit you to give a great verbal introduction to your sponsor at a meeting or training session. This would give them more credibility, which they could use to assist you in developing your business. Distributors were often told stories of people who had all the potential in the world, but had blown themselves out of the business because they had an out-of-control ego. Part of being an outstanding leader meant you had to have been an outstanding follower.

The distributor was never to contradict or criticize his upline openly, as this would set up a pattern of bad duplication. Phony edification was as bad, if not worse, than open *de-edification*. This would involve being loyal and complimentary to your upline in

* Martin, Walter, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Bethany House, Oct. 1997 Anniversary Edition, p. 36

person, but being critical when you were alone with members of your group. This false loyalty, distributors were taught, would always come back to get you. Specifically, if you criticized your upline, you were teaching your group to be critical of you. Once again, a marriage analogy was often used for illustration. There were times when a husband and wife would not agree on a topic involving the children. However, they needed to always show a “united front” before the children and resolve their differences in private.

Never Cross Line

The next Cardinal Rule requires a basic understanding of the multi-level or network marketing structure. As mentioned before, your sponsors and the people above them were your **upline** and had a vested interest in your success. The distributors you sponsored and those below them were your **downline** and were distributorships in which you had a vested interest. Any other distributor would be considered **cross line**. For example, let’s say your sponsor sponsored both you and another couple named Bob and Mary. Bob and Mary and the entire organization they developed would be considered cross line to you.

“*Never cross line*” was a core principle which referred to not having any business-related or personal conversations with distributors who were cross line from you. It was recommended that you had little or no social contact with these people as well. The reasoning was that this could cause confusion and inadvertently damage both of your businesses.

Early on in the business, Kerry and Chris called to talk to us about a couple we had sponsored named Justin and Samantha.* They found out Samantha had been taking walks for quite some time with a neighbor who was now in Kerry and Chris’s organization. We were told to call Samantha and have her stop doing this, as they were now cross line. This all sounded a little too “Big Brother-ish” to us, and we flat out refused to tell Samantha to stop walking with a good friend. We agreed to recommend that they not discuss business and left it at that. We understood the importance of the principle, but figured our sponsors desired us to enforce it to an extreme that was certainly more zealous than it could have ever been intended.

Never Implement New Ideas

The beauty of the plan and its accompanying system was its simplicity. To bring in hundreds of distributors, and eventually thousands and tens of thousands, the process had to be kept very simple and exactly duplicate-able. To implement one small change could have as dramatic an effect as having a ship that was crossing the Atlantic off by four degrees for the entire trip. Initially, there would be no noticeable variance from the planned route. However, at the end of the journey, the ship would be hundreds of miles from its intended destination.

* Not their real names

One analogy we were all familiar with from our grade school days was that of whispering a secret to a child in the front row. This child, in turn, tells the student behind her, and this process continues until the last person in class has the message whispered to him. It is almost comical to hear the bizarre message that emerges after several permutations in the communication process. This is why we **had** to keep *the system* pure. Prospects were invited in the same manner, shown the plan in the prescribed way, followed up on with specific starter materials, and started in The Business and on the system in a nearly identical manner around the world.

We were told there was no need for new ideas. Both couples, Dexter and Birdie and Zack and Molly, had spent over two decades in developing the perfect system and pattern for success. We did not need new ideas! What we needed were new people in a system that worked. This was where the importance of **counseling** came into play.

One of the benefits of working with people who were successful in this business was that once a month you could get with your upline *to counsel*. This afforded you the opportunity to ask specific questions and to increase the profitability of your business. Additionally, if you had a challenge, your upline could provide a quick solution. This was entirely logical, because it was nearly impossible to develop a new scenario they had not already dealt with somewhere in their organization.

We were very blessed in that we had sponsors who were already successful and were such a tremendous encouragement to us. They were terrific up-lifters and made us feel as if we were truly leaders. In the process of building our business to the Direct level, we met several other members of our upline. All of them were extremely complimentary and helpful in developing the foundation of our business, from which a global enterprise developed.

Kindred Spirits

"I want you to know that I love each and every one of you."*

— Amway Crown Ambassador Dexter Yager

It took awhile to get used to hearing the words, ***"We love you guys."*** Many of the speakers from stage would say they loved us, because we were kindred spirits, so to speak. We were on the same journey and understood each other. We began developing very strong emotional bonds with those in our organization as well as in our upline. It became very much like a family. This was the most loving, compassionate, encouraging, God-focused group of people we had ever been associated with. These were the people we wanted our children to emulate. We felt we now had an incredible environment in which to raise our children.

We now had many distributors in our organization** who were much more like family members than business partners. We had begun spending a great deal of time together. Rick and June were one of these great couples. They came into the business as

* Crown Ambassadors, Dexter & Birdie Yager, Stock No. FED 94-12, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

** I am not using their real names in this book in order to protect their identity

quiet, somewhat shy people. It was incredible to watch them blossom as leaders in the organization they developed. Like us, they saw their distributors as partners more than downline. Both of them overcame their natural shyness and became very effective public speakers. Their love for The Business and particularly for their people was quite apparent. Their combination of sincerity and professionalism enabled them to build a very credible organization. In their group were teachers, attorneys, physicians, insurance professionals, a pastor, and other people from many walks of life. It was a thrill to see them recognized onstage at seminars for their accomplishments!

Kirk and Linda both came to The Business from professional backgrounds. In contrast to Rick and June, Kirk and Linda were extremely comfortable in leadership roles. They enjoyed public speaking and excelled at it. They became the role model for the work ethic among leadership in our organization. There was no limit to how many miles Kirk was willing to fly or drive to build their business, with the goal of ultimately purchasing “his freedom.” The organization they developed would eventually span many states and expand its outreach into South America. We took great joy in building The Business together. I particularly appreciated their leadership and work ethic, as I did not have to spend much time in their organization once it was up and running. They established challenging goals and pursued them with dedication.

Dean and Kelly, another wonderful couple, were in their forties and were models of integrity. Their daughters often babysat for our children as our family grew. Our children literally grew up together because of this contact. They were not bold, confident speakers, but made up for this with sincerity and compassion for others, making everyone around them feel comfortable and welcome. Dean and Kelly were a special breed. They were the kind of friends you knew you could trust without reserve. These qualities, combined with a great sense of humor, afforded them the ability to develop an organization that included quite a few Directs and an Emerald. This organization would include police officers, a surgeon, CPAs, a financial planner, and members of nearly every respected profession. This group grew from humble beginnings in a small, rural town, eventually extending into many states, Europe, and the Philippines.

These were just a few of the many very close friendships we developed as we were building The Business. We spent countless hours together in open meetings, at seminars, and in cars driving great distances to do “house meetings.”

Gradually, these people became our family. We all came into the business with the understanding that we could build on a “*very limited part-time basis*,” when it would fit into our schedules. After listening to the tapes daily, reading all the books, and going to the seminars, many of us found ourselves going out four, five, six, and some even seven nights a week building The Business. It was a slow, unnoticed alteration in our life. *We now understood free enterprise and the rewards that were available to us and to those we loved.* We had a new understanding, and we were no longer willing to suffer the oppression of regular jobs.

Thankfully, we had all learned quite a bit from the system and our upline. Distributors were advised that it was okay if they did not want to have a luxury home, new vehicles, furs for their wife, or family trips to Hawaii and Disneyland. Our efforts at our jobs were providing these types of luxuries — for our bosses and the stockholders.

There were several examples that were frequently used to reinforce the group’s paradigm that employers were oppressive. A rhetorical question often asked of male

distributors was this: “Who do you love more, YOUR wife or your employer’s wife?” Some Diamonds would remark, “*You must love your boss more than your wife, since you have decided to spend more time every day with him.*”

Others would make joking comments to the effect of: “Scientific surveys have documented that your wife is peaking sexually at about 1:00 p.m., and you missed it by being at work. Had you been a retired Emerald or Diamond, you would have been home more often to capitalize on this scientific phenomenon.” Another Diamond described people who had jobs as “handicapped in a sense.” Having a job was referred to as the form of modern-day slavery that many of us chose to voluntarily submit to before coming into The Business.

In addition to the working career, you were investing your life in something that had little or no security. Don’t we all know people who were faithful, hard-working employees, only to get laid off in their late fifties, just before they became fully vested in their retirement plan? They would then go to Wal-Mart and could not even land a job there, because they were totally over-qualified.

In many meetings, the acronym **J.O.B.** was used with great frequency. If you have a **J.O.B.**, you may be **Just Over Broke**. A member of our upline would even state that it was your boss’s specific goal to *keep* you broke; otherwise, you would have the ability to leave. We were told that you were paid what your *job* was worth, not what *you* were worth. Your employer’s objective was to keep the position filled for as little as possible. You might not know it, but the word job was a Latin word. The root word’s original meaning was “*jobus operandi*,” which translates today into “**Jerk On Board**,” or so the joke goes. An Amway Emerald would often describe the time he and his wife both had jobs and referred to themselves as “double jerks.” Knowing the above, if you chose to spend the rest of your life working at a job for a boss, most likely you were a “**Jackass Of the Boss**.” With the climate of corporate downsizing at the time, these philosophies fed the fears of many people who had legitimate concerns about economic security in an evolving marketplace.

I certainly did not hate my career, but at the same time, I did not want to be taken advantage of in any manner. Why would I continue to let someone else control both my income and my time with my family? It made a lot more sense to work for myself and have my family benefit directly from the fruits of my labor. Patty and I decided to push ourselves hard and build “our business” without reserve. We needed to hit the 7500 PV level to **go Direct** and make an additional \$25,000 a year!

On Our Own

About the time we reached 4000 PV, Kerry and Chris stopped having almost any involvement in showing the plan in our group. I understood this was certainly from the specific direction of upline counsel. Like many distributors, they did absolutely nothing in their business without *checking upline*. We noticed at the training session that there were very few people outside of the organization Patty and I were developing.

We assumed our upline had told Kerry and Chris to go work with new groups, as we were “up and running.” Their function changed from showing the plan in our organization to giving us specific direction in *counseling* some of our leaders. In addition,

we would still plan the training sessions together that they hosted for us. At this time, there were no problems. The business and system had functioned appropriately, and *they had successfully duplicated themselves*.

To make these counseling sessions effective, we needed to bring several things: our schedule book, a notepad, a goal planning guide (goal sheet), a tape recorder, our group drawn out in circles, and accurate listings of the number of books, tapes, and seminar tickets we were moving.

Important data we needed to track was listed on the goal sheet, which was a form that basically served as a road map to *go Direct* and help others do the same. The books, tapes, and seminar tickets were considered *tools*. We would learn that PV, and its related income, would always follow the tool flow. The more books and tapes going into your organization, the more knowledgeable and motivated the distributors would be to build their own businesses. We were advised that there was a direct correlation between how many books, tapes, and seminar tickets you are moving with each PV level. The two key numbers to track were tapes-of-the-week (continuing education) and seminar tickets. You would normally have “gone Direct” when you had 40 people on tape-of-the-week and had sold 80 seminar tickets in your group.

These representations did, in fact, work out in real life. We developed a leadership team that helped many distributors hit the magical 7500 PV level and go Direct. Some achieved this volume level with fewer than 40 people on the tape-of-the-week plan. There was never an instance, however, where someone had an organization with at least 40 people on tape-of-the-week that did not do 7500 PV. *This seemed to reinforce the need for the system*. There was a mention of having customers on some goal sheets, but it was not made a priority in counseling sessions, training sessions, seminars, or on tapes. Selling represented the old days of Amway! We were building distribution networks. The momentum continued to grow, as we developed a team of loyal, motivated distributors.

The objective was to have a house meeting for a new couple at their home within a week from when they first saw the plan. It did not give them much time to evaluate anything about The Business or product pricing, but they were excited when they sponsored someone new and felt as if their business was working. Like us, many had sponsored quite a few people who relied upon representations before they actually had any first-hand experience in The Business. In the beginning, we had not been given any time to evaluate or compare pricing, and, due to the big push to sponsor quickly, we relied solely upon the representations of our sponsor and upline team.

Having people sponsored quickly excited us. What we did not realize was that these relationships would be one of the reasons we would stay in The Business to our own detriment, far beyond any point of reason. We had an obligation to help these people. We *had* to make it work, not only for us, but also for them and for their children. Many of the Amway Diamonds would quote Dexter and say, “When you build a friendship, you build a *Direct-ship*.” This seemed to be very true.

“They claim to direct us to the light, but they actually entice us into darkness.”*

— Derek Prince

* Prince, Derek, *They Shall Expel Demons*, Choice Books, 1998, p. 121

CHAPTER 4

Big Wheels Kept on Turning

*“Rich DeVos [Amway Founder] is one of the most energetic and dedicated Christian laymen I have ever known. I am never in his presence that I don’t feel his strength of character and dedication to the things of God.”**

— Evangelist Billy Graham

We went Direct (Silver Producer), and things began to get *very* exciting! We were invited to the Directs’ leadership meetings before each seminar and Direct-only seminars hosted by Zack and his leaders. This was a thrill!

At these special meetings, the key principles of loyalty (to your product line and upline), goals setting, and the work ethic were all reinforced, but **far more strongly**. The metaphor “you wouldn’t feed steak to a baby” was often used to describe the tiers of teaching within the leadership. As Directs, we had proven ourselves and were advised we were ready to hear it straight without any “sugar coating.” Speakers would often ask Directs questions like, “You’re real men, aren’t you? How many of you have jobs?” They would joke about praying for those of us who still had to get up early and go to jobs.

Just *sleeping* was becoming a major goal for many of us. I would often stop home briefly after work and grab a sandwich, kiss Patty, and head out of town to show the plan. Many nights, I would not get home until 2 a.m. or later. I would get up feeling very groggy a few hours later, kiss Patty goodbye again, and head off to work — and the cycle continued. We kept telling ourselves *it was going to be worth all the effort and soon we would be full-time parents together!* We had to “pay the price,” as they say. I would soon learn to drive myself far past the point of exhaustion. Patty only recently told me how fearful she was of me dying on the road on the countless nights I was out showing the plan. I would drive from my home state in Pennsylvania to as far away as Maine, Michigan, or Atlanta. In some cases, I would arrive home at sunrise, just in time to catch a few hours sleep. The result was that our group was growing and freedom was soon going to be ours!

We had been expecting to make around \$2,000 a month as new *Directs*. These were the representations made in **all** the plans the distributors saw. That income representation was made in the SA-4400, an Amway-produced document that must be given to all prospects after they have seen the Amway Sales and Marketing plan. Distributors and prospects were routinely advised that that this was a “Federal Trade

* DeVos, Rich, Hope From My Heart, (Endorsement by Billy Graham)

Commission” document. This continual representation gave an ongoing air of legitimacy. The income representation of making over \$2,000 a month was based upon sponsoring six new people, each of whom would sponsor four, who, in turn, sponsored two more. The illustration was also predicated upon each of these doing 100 PV in monthly volume. This process was described routinely as a “no brainer.” One Diamond was known for saying, “*Even a blind dog with a tape in his mouth could go Direct.*”

The challenge was nearly impossible to accomplish! We went Direct with a growing organization, but it was incredibly difficult to keep that many people active. The turnover was overwhelming. We went Direct with a few growing organizations; yet we were making a net income after system expenses of closer to \$600 dollars a month rather than the expected \$2,000. I was now spending well over forty hours a week building *our business*, and Patty was working even harder. In retrospect, I now realize that her work was far more taxing than mine. Sure, I had to go to my corporate job on little sleep and then drive to meetings. She had to take total care of the children and our house (meals, laundry, cleaning, taking out the garbage, and sometimes mowing the lawn), be a source of constant encouragement to our downline, and take their product orders — all the while being the perfect, cheerful Amway wife. This was far easier said than done.

“This business is a way of life.”*

— Amway Crown Jody Victor

I do not recall at exactly what point we surrendered our entire life to The Business, because we certainly never consciously made that choice. I do not believe that anyone consciously makes that decision. It was the specific result of an intensive, seamless recruitment and indoctrination process. After an enormous amount of indoctrination and training, we honestly believed our complete commitment to *our business* was **the only way** we could best serve our God, our family, and our country. We began to forsake all other friendships outside of The Business. There was no other way. We had no time for anything else.

There were two groups of people we had to deal with — people who were *in* The Business and those on the outside. They were two separate and distinct worlds. People who were “*in*” understood, and you could easily communicate using business clichés. People were either “fired up” (excited) or not. They were positive or negative. They were motivated or lazy (if they did not get in). Showing someone The Business was often described as a financial or intellectual IQ test. It was all very black and white. Friends and family to whom you showed the plan were either for you or they were against you.

Unknowingly, in a gradual process, we went from casual distributors to totally dedicated business owners. We were not committing to this business, but to our own family’s financial future. After all, the income stream from the global distribution business we developed would be will-able to our children. It was a slow process, but after a year, we had little or no contact with anyone outside of The Business. Our schedule was one of unending training sessions, seminars, product fairs, promotional trips, open

* Jody Victor, *It’s Unbelievable* audiotape Stock No. DBR 897

meetings, house meetings, and follow ups. I began to log tens of thousands of miles a year in my car. It was not unusual for a committed “road warrior” to sleep in his car in his suit, just out of sheer exhaustion. We were fighting for our families’ economic freedom. I had to be **man enough** to be willing to pay the price.

Distributors were constantly reminded that God’s Word says, “A man without vision shall perish” (Proverbs 29:18). We had the vision and had to keep it alive to endure the constant travel and time away from our families. When Patty and I were together, it was usually for an open meeting or seminar. This was our only time together — with few exceptions.

In retrospect, I cannot comprehend how she made it all those years. As our business grew, so did our family. She loved and nurtured four-year-old Adam, two-year-old Rachel, and our newborn joy, Hannah, almost completely on her own. I was gone constantly and was exhausted when I was home. I had trained myself to go on very little sleep and could keep up a grueling pace for about ten or more days. I would sometimes collapse on a weekend and sleep for almost an entire day as my body recovered.

No one in our downline knew of this, as we always just smiled and worked more and more. We were taught (by several Diamonds) not to share our schedule with the group. “They wouldn’t understand it, because they don’t have the big dream yet” was the usual reason we were given. The plan was shown and prospects were told that income could be made in a 12- to 15-hour weekly time commitment. Somehow, this was just not making much sense, as Patty and I worked that much in a single day for a combined total of 30 hours. But it was going to be worth it, as we were both going to be full-time parents soon. What a joy all of this was going to be!

Our efforts appeared to be paying off, as our organization began to mushroom throughout many states and eventually into other countries. Patty and I achieved the rare level of Ruby direct, which meant we had developed a personal organization that moved 15,000 PV in products and services that month (over \$30,000). Because this was such a rare achievement, Patty and I were brought on stage at the next seminar and recognized with much fanfare. It was humbling to get a standing ovation from your closest friends. We both would rather not have had that kind of attention, but we were thankful that God was using our accomplishments to inspire others.

It seemed like the more we *succeeded*, the more people in our organization believed they could become just as successful. I use the term “succeeded” loosely. At that point, we had expected to be earning over \$50,000 a year, but, in reality, our net income was nearer to \$10,000 for a superhuman effort. Your income, we soon learned, was a nearly taboo topic. You would be treated like an imbecile for even bringing it up. After all, **this was the purest form of free enterprise in America**. We were all paid on the same scale, and we completely controlled our own income. Anyone who was not happy with his or her income was advised to get a mirror and look directly at the person responsible.

When you had maintained at least 7500 PV in monthly volume for six months in a fiscal year, with certain restrictions, you would be recognized as a Profit Sharing Direct Distributor. At that point, the plan showed a monthly net income stream of over \$2,000 a month. With year-end bonuses, Profit Sharing Directs were depicted making around \$35,000 a year on a part-time basis. This was for a business that was structured 6-4-2.

In the mid to late ‘90s, the sales and marketing plan shown to prospects changed

dramatically at the direction of our upline Diamond. We were now to show a 9-4-2 configuration when showing the plan to prospects. Once again, for clarity, this depiction represented you sponsoring nine, each of whom sponsored four, who each sponsored two, all of whom did a monthly volume of 100 PV. Now the annual income showing for Profit Sharing Directs working part-time leapt to \$54,000. This was an enormous shift in representation, perhaps used to draw in a more upscale, professional distributor. Our organization began to change in demographics to include a growing number of extremely successful professionals and business owners.

Something else of critical importance happened to distributors at the Profit Sharing level. They were inducted into a business in which they had already been unknowingly participating. Up until then, neither Patty nor I (nor any of our downline leaders) were aware that we had been participating in an extremely secretive secondary business. This was our upline Diamonds' book, tape, video, CD-ROM, and support-materials business. We were notified about our "confidential" meeting shortly after being recognized on stage as new Profit Sharing Directs.

Our sponsor called us over for a counseling session and explained that we would now begin receiving a small confidential perk. We would get a fifty-cent break in price on every tape and a small percentage off every book that was purchased by members of our group. This was specifically described as **not being an income source**, but a means by which our Diamond wanted to help put more gas in our tank for traveling and to help us stock more tools in our trunk to sell.

We were advised to discuss this with no one. At the time, this seemed to make sense. It was such a completely insignificant amount of money that it did not even pay for the gas my car was consuming weekly. Unfortunately, leaders at my level were completely unaware of the scope or magnitude of their instrumental role in this covert business. At that point, we did not have access to any information that would have led us to question this insignificant perk. Therefore, we never felt any conflict about it. This was particularly true when we helped members of our group go Profit Sharing and passed this perk on to them, thereby reducing or eliminating our own.

Somewhere between going Direct and Ruby, we got "the call" we had worked so hard for. We were told we had earned the right to counsel directly with Amway Double Diamonds Zack and Molly at their 10,000-square-foot mansion. We were advised that this was a very rare honor and that we should consider it to be a real privilege. They were, indeed, millionaire makers. They had helped many people become tremendously wealthy. These lucky people had unlimited family time and lifestyles that most people only dream of. We were told that Zack and Molly had over 100,000 distributors in their organization and had helped thousands of them make well over \$2000 a month.

This certainly was not an opportunity to be taken lightly. We were instructed to bring a written list of questions, a goal sheet, and a tape recorder to tape the entire session. We were both nervous and excited at the same time.

Zack had my utmost respect. It was not because he had become wealthy from humble beginnings. He had my respect because he had achieved all his wealth by "serving others" in the Amway business. We were told again and again that his success had been predicated only upon his servanthood to thousands of other people whom he had helped to succeed. I wanted to become more like him. My goal was not simply to succeed. What made this different from any other business venture I had seen was that

you only moved forward by helping others do the same. Zack had certainly done this, and in a big way. I was given Zack's private, unlisted home telephone number and a specific time to call to schedule our counseling session. My heart raced as I dialed the seven digits. With each ring, it seemed as if my heart was pumping peanut butter.

Molly answered and was incredibly warm and gracious. She seemed to intuitively sense my nervousness and immediately set me at ease. She had done this for others many times before. Zack got on the phone and was warm and encouraging. He even told a few jokes to lighten the atmosphere. He said he knew we were going to be big in this business and he was anxious to get with us personally to help give our business a jump-start.

We scheduled a time to get together, and he was very careful to make certain this time would not be in conflict with my corporate work schedule. I knew how successful he was and was pleasantly surprised to learn, on a firsthand basis, how sincerely concerned he was for others. Patty and I wanted to emulate Zack and Molly in every way.

Molly and Zack were larger-than-life heroes to me. People from all over the world have learned from them by listening to their tapes. Some were even fortunate enough to see them in person at huge seminars. Some flew in from Europe to counsel with them. Going to their mansion to personally counsel with them was The Business equivalent of going to Mecca. They had been presented to us as being almost all-knowing.

They seemed to have a great marriage. They spoke from stage of one another with incredible respect and gratitude. Their strong marriage and enduring love for one another made them models for us. They had a wonderful family with whom they reportedly spent an enormous amount of time. We were so thankful to get their time, because we so wanted to achieve these things as well. This couple had helped many, many people improve all areas of their lives.

The great news of our counseling directly with Zack and Molly spread quickly throughout our group, giving us even more credibility within our own organization. Zack often spoke of paying more taxes in a week than he used to make as a salaried professional in a year. This made his time extremely valuable. Distributors were told there was no way they could afford his time should he ever chose to bill them for it. We certainly had to make this meeting count.

Patty and I were dressed in our best, as we began our two-hour journey to their mansion. It was very exciting to know that the life of our dreams would soon be a reality. All we had to do was take the advice Zack and Molly gave to us and apply it. We were well groomed — and our car was spotless as well. Kerry and Chris had made sure that we remembered this detail, as it would be de-edifying/insulting to drive Zack and Molly in a dirty car should they decide to go out for lunch.

You Can Trust These People

"Rich DeVos is one of the wisest men I've known."

— Charles W. Colson

Upon our arrival, we saw something with incredibly clarity — **Amway worked!** They lived debt free. Their home was enormous. Their fleet of luxury cars was worth several times more than our home. We walked apprehensively down the slate walkway to the large wooden entrance doors. I smiled nervously at Patty, as I rang the doorbell above a large gargoyle-like statue. Molly greeted us warmly with a hug and invited us into their home. Zack was busy on the telephone; so Molly gave us a tour, while we waited for him. We had never seen anything like it.

The house had nearly 20-foot-high ceilings in some rooms with decorations and furniture from all over the world. The incredible thing was that it was all paid for, as a result of the financial principles they had learned in The Business. Being somewhat simple people, we never wanted a house that ornate. It was quite a showplace. However, it excited us tremendously to know we could create any level of success and do with it as we pleased. The extreme material success they enjoyed was not what we desired, but simply more evidence that The Business we were building worked well for those willing to put in the effort.

Molly got us each a cold drink and excused herself to see how long Zack would be unavailable. In a few minutes, they returned together. Zack greeted us with a warm smile and focused eye contact. He shook my hand firmly and gave Patty a gentle hug. He was a true gentleman. Because their time is so valuable, we anticipated jumping right into The Business counseling.

They both helped us feel more at ease by asking many questions about us, our children, and our hopes and dreams. They were extremely complimentary and went out of their way to make us feel good about ourselves. They showed a real interest in us and seemed very warm and compassionate. Zack complimented us both, specifically for not being overweight or heavy. Because we controlled our weight, it signified we had the internal self-discipline to succeed.

Molly said almost nothing for the next two hours, except for interjecting occasionally an agreement with statements Zack had made. He once again advised that we were going to be big in this business, and he wanted to give us the specific logistics to buy our financial freedom and help me get out of my job. We waited anxiously for this “**new**” leadership level information.

He pulled out the tool list, which is a listing of hundreds of books and tapes available for purchase. He asked me if I had heard certain tapes and read certain books. Zack would cringe in mock disbelief when we would find one I had not been through yet. He said, “I’m sorry, I have been holding you back. I should have told you to get this book a long time ago. No wonder you’re not wealthy.” The message was simple. ***There was no new leadership information.*** The educational system of books, tapes, and seminars was **THE** secret to building a profitable Amway business. It was simple! We just had to promote the books, tapes, and seminars better. The more educated and informed our group was, the more profitable they would be as well.

A great deal of time was spent building up our sponsors as people we could look to for leadership and guidance. They were edified to a level that was almost unrealistic. We were both at the same level in The Business as Direct Distributors. Patty and I did not feel like we had an enormous amount of business knowledge and wisdom at this level, but Kerry and Chris were portrayed as very wise, seasoned leaders. We were told to promote and edify them at every opportunity, in order to give them the credibility they needed to

work effectively in our organization. This would, in turn, only benefit us, as they were working to help us get free. We were working well together at this point and it seemed a little odd that so much time was spent on reminding us that they were our *upline*. In any event, Zack and Molly knew more than we did about how to make this work, and we trusted them completely.

They helped us review a goal sheet and re-emphasized the importance of moving more books, tapes, and seminar tickets into our organization monthly. In the past, distributors had been advised to stock Amway products in their homes to be able to supply their group on short notice. Because we had very little money, Zack advised us that it was more important to keep a running inventory of books, tapes, and other tools to sell to our Distributors.

He shared that the secret to his success was that he was willing to stock enough tapes and other tools to supply his group adequately. When he was a Direct, he had two tables almost full with stacks of tapes 12 inches high. The organizations with the most motivation and logistical knowledge obviously were the ones that were going to succeed quickly. Every business required an investment, and this was a small investment in comparison to the return in our future. We left their house with complete confidence that we had the opportunity and the ability to earn financial freedom for our family and others as well.

Soon, we began to help people in our organization go Direct, and the excitement built as they were recognized on stage for their achievements. *At each level, we were advised that the big money was just around the corner at the next level.* There was no reason to doubt this, as we were literally surrounded by wealthy people and a few young people who had retired. The level that people normally retired at was Pearl or Emerald.

“Bill Gates is responsible for helping develop 3300 millionaires, and then he said the number two company that has produced the most millionaires is the Amway Corporation. He said the Amway Corporation is an organization that is growing in leaps and bounds and they are responsible for producing over 2200 millionaires.”*

— voice mail passed on to distributors

Pearl was a “*big money*” level in Amway. We worked with a young crossline couple who had retired in their twenties at that level and had an incredible lifestyle. We were advised on multiple occasions that one young man made well over \$100,000 a year as a Pearl in the Amway business. This was a source of enormous motivation for us.

Going Pearl would put you in an elite category of leadership, as less than 1% of all active North American Distributors ever accomplish it. At this level, another bonus, referred to as the depth bonus, kicked in. This was certainly the beginning of the big

* January 30, 1999 Amvox voice mail sent to group from Zack and Molly and Dexter and Birdie Yager in which a distributor describes an (alleged) news report

league of money making in the Amway business.

In a traditional business, the bigger it became, the more time it required to manage it. Most traditional business owners, we learned, were slaves to their own business. The business owned them instead of vice versa. Many business owners we heard on tape echoed these types of frustrations.

The workload was difficult to bear. I missed Patty so much I would cry silently at times on the long drive to meetings. She was the wife of my dreams, and it was so hard to be away that much. In a twisted way, it is my love for her that was used to keep me going out night after night to put an end to this marathon of a schedule. We got a cell phone to be able to check voice mail and leave each other messages. She would often call near midnight, when I was on my way home, as a “wake-up call,” to make certain I was not falling asleep at the wheel. She feared I could die on the road from going so long in such an exhausted state.

This was not an unrealistic, emotional thought. We were aware of quite a few accidents that resulted in broken backs or even the deaths of distributors. We had one friend who was involved in a late night accident in which his wife was injured, and he bit his own tongue in half. This all happened during the month they were pushing hard for Direct. Another Emerald leader’s own brother was killed in a car crash, and a great deal was made of the fact that, when they retrieved the schedule book from his body, the next two weeks were booked solid with Amway meetings. At the time, I remember thinking that it was a valiant manner in which to give your life. He had been doing his best for those he loved. Later, I would brag with other high-level leaders and compare our “asleep at the wheel” stories. It was a badge of courage for the fully committed road warrior. I had been fortunate to survive several close calls.

The more I missed Patty and our wonderful kids, the more driven I became to get the job done. Many of the speakers at seminars and on tapes spoke of putting their last dollar into the gas tank or into a seminar where they made the decision to get free. They, too, had slept in their cars. Their wives and children now looked to them as heroes in their own home. We often heard stories of incredible success that came shortly after a point of utter desperation and despair. We were guided to work through these challenges that were an inherent part of the success process. After all, a diamond was at one time just a worthless piece of coal that went through intense pressure, finally emerging as something of beauty and value.

Amway Diamonds often joked about how broke they used to be. Some speakers told of leaving for a long-distance meeting and having to sell tapes upon their arrival just to get enough gas money to make it back home. We would have to do a great deal on faith, but there were times when I wondered if my faith would be strong enough.

We made the decision to do whatever it took to *go Pearl*. We were working unimaginable hours already and could not picture how we could do any more, but somehow we had to. We could not live like this any more. We *had* to go Pearl and make a large income, so I could retire and be with my family. Once again, to go Pearl we needed to help three different people we had sponsored go Direct in a single month. Very few go Direct, as a percentage of distributors. To help three do it, and all in one month, would take some real work. Patty and I spoke of it as we set the goal and decided to help not three, but four of our organizations go Direct in the same month. We wanted to have a spare, in case one couple missed the mark and could not hit their goal.

From that moment on, we focused entirely on what The Business was predicated upon, helping others succeed. We had heard many times from Zig Ziglar and our leaders, “If you help enough other people get what they want, you’ll have everything that you want.” Our energies were focused on helping our people set and achieve their own goals.

Profess It, Confess It, Possess It

“Cults use Christian terminology, but redefine terms to suit their own belief and practices.”*

Freedom was the big dream for most distributors we worked with. We talked about it constantly. At seminars and training sessions, we often related our dreams to each other, describing the joy we would feel when we handed a resignation letter to our boss. Some described smashing their alarm clock with a sledgehammer. Some young Pearls or Emeralds spoke of the day they left work in either a limousine or a helicopter. We dreamed of having the lifestyle of six Saturdays and a Sunday. It was all we could think of. We had to learn to focus our mental resources in this direction.

We were instructed that professing only purely positive was biblical. Diamonds would repeat the phrase “whatsoever ye sayeth shall come to pass,” a loose translation of Mark 11:23. To speak negatively was not only harmful, it was against God’s word. Our upline highly promoted the book *What You Say is What You Get!*, which is devoted almost exclusively to that topic.

We got into this business simply to make extra money, and now even our spiritual life was benefiting. It amazed us that people criticized the Amway business and its leaders. These were the godliest people I had ever personally known. It was no wonder they are so successful. They were living by and applying God’s laws, weren’t they? We taught these principles not only to members of our organization, but to our children as well. Our children were not allowed to say the word “can’t.” In challenging situations, they learned to say, “I’ll try.” Patty and I were even becoming better parents, as a result of the business. We were both very thankful to learn godly principles that we could teach to our children.

An event was about to occur that would forever alter the direction of our lives. Our sponsors, Kerry and Chris, spoke often of freedom. We had met Pearls, Emeralds, and Diamonds who had developed extraordinary lifestyles with their Amway businesses. Zack and Molly lived a life that was beyond description. They seemed to travel the world at will. We had not seen anyone we knew personally come up through the ranks and retire young. Kerry and Chris were Profit Sharing Direct Amway Distributors the day he called me. I will never forget it. Kerry called and said he had some incredible news. He shared

* Smith, P.W., Hayes, C. P., McRoberts, K. D., (1977) *In Search of Truth*, Springfield, MO: Radiant Life

with me that he had retired from his job. Zack had not only given his permission for this, he had helped craft Kerry's resignation letter to a tyrannical boss.

Kerry certainly did not leave quietly. He went out in blazing glory. He had planned his exit carefully with Zack. From his description, Kerry had worked for a terrible boss who had asked him to do things that were unethical. Kerry had an arrogant streak at times, and there was no love lost between him and his boss. Kerry gave no notice and simply did not show up for an important staff meeting. He let his boss frantically page him several times.

Eventually, he showed up at the staff meeting, which was already in progress, and interrupted his boss. He handed his boss his resignation letter and a gift. The man did not know what was happening and asked to discuss it with Kerry later. Kerry insisted that he read the letter immediately, in front of the rest of the staff. From what we were told, it was far from complimentary. Kerry then insisted that his boss open his gift, which turned out to be a gift-wrapped copy of the book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. This story was repeated again and again to the glee of distributors, working hard to obtain their freedom.

This was another crossroads in my life. As Kerry told me the story, my heart began to race. I can tell you the exact tiles I was standing on in our kitchen when I got this call. My life was changed forever in a moment. I had no idea you could make enough money as a Direct in Amway to retire! I vowed to work at an almost inhuman pace to get my freedom. There were no excuses now. We had living, breathing proof that this business was working. Kerry soon began speaking often of the joys of freedom. He talked about sleeping in and having the whole day with his family. He had obtained the lifestyle of six Saturdays and a Sunday that we had until then only heard of. Now it was real.

He would later go on to buy a gorgeous white Mercedes SL from Zack. No one would ever again tell me that this did not work or that there was no money in Amway. If we could just do what they had done, we could be together every day as a family! Patty and I were elated and energized by these events. Kerry was incredibly loyal to Zack and became more so as time went on. All we had to do was remain loyal to the business and be teachable, and our dreams were soon to be realized.

"On encountering a cultist, then, always remember that you are dealing with a person who is familiar with Christian terminology, and who has carefully redefined it to fit the system of thought he or she now embraces."*

— Dr. Walter Martin

* Martin, Walter, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Bethany House, Oct. 1997 Anniversary Edition, p. 30

Going for Broke

“Helping people to help themselves is what Amway and Easter Seals are all about. Amway’s independent business owners are united in their goals and dreams by the Amway business opportunity.”*

— Jim Williams, President & CEO, National Easter Seal Society

It was around the sixteenth of the month when Patty and I set our new plan in motion to have not three, but four leaders go Direct in our downline. We never discussed our objective with our downline leaders, as our focus was to help them bring their own businesses to the next level. We helped each leader set goals with each of their key people. I met with one couple, Keith and Linda, late on a weeknight; we set their goal with them, and we prayed together that God would bless them and guide their efforts.

Within just a few days, nearly everyone in the organization had a goal that was his or her own. This focus electrified the group with energy and direction. We all put on our track shoes, so to speak, and ran hard every night and weekend to help all our people achieve their objectives. It was a thrilling time, as one distributor after another called with the news that they had hit their goal and were going to be recognized on stage at the next seminar at 1000, 2500, or 4000 PV.

On the last day of the month, after all the orders were totaled, four different organizations (referred to as “legs”) had gone Direct! We had never heard of anyone “breaking” four Directs in a single month. That was thrilling! The organization we had developed had just done over 30,000 PV, which was somewhere near \$70,000 in one month! We were new Pearl Directs and could almost taste the freedom for which we had worked so hard.

No one in the group knew our own goal had been met as our focus had been on *their* goals. Of course, because of the rules regarding cross lining, they would not know that each other had gone Direct until the awards ceremony. Oddly enough, this was even true of close friends or co-workers. You were never to discuss any details of your business. It would be economic suicide to do this, or so the experienced leadership in our upline had taught us. Therefore, the success of our entire organization was almost a secret, which Patty and I joyfully shared only with each other. Our freedom and family time were just about in sight now!

Because of the no crosslining policy, the general recognition for each of our people would come at the next seminar. That event finally arrived; couple after couple came proudly across stage and were congratulated publicly for their efforts. It was a wonderful celebration. This was another aspect of The Business that made us so proud to

* Jim Williams, President & CEO, National Easter Seal Society, April 1999 Amagram

be part of it. People were built up and their accomplishments celebrated. In the corporate world, a promotion usually resulted in hidden jealousies and behind-the-back sniping, because only one person could get the raise. Here, not only was success unlimited, but the more others succeeded, the easier it was for you to succeed. This came about because of the credibility built into each new success story, as one couple after another moved across the stage. It wasn't socialism; instead, it was a wonderful win/win cooperative effort, where you determined your success by the amount you helped others.

All the new Directs, wearing corsages and boutonnieres, were brought onstage to the theme of a loud *Rocky* soundtrack. The crowd of hundreds went nuts. They began clapping and chanting, "*Fired up! Fired up! Fired up!*" The people in the audience now had their belief level elevated, as they saw others they personally knew beginning to succeed. **Nothing inspires confidence quite like success!** The host commented something to the effect that "*it looks like Amway works here...*" to the crowd's glee and burgeoning enthusiasm. In their own way, each couple looked like Ken and Barbie. The men wore freshly pressed suits, and the wives all looked like queens in the new dresses they had purchased just for this occasion. They all seemed closely bonded as couples and also as a group by the experience. There was camaraderie and a respect among those who had paid the same price to move ahead.

As if our pride in them had not made this exciting enough, what happened next thrust us into a world we were not prepared for. We were brought on stage as brand-new Pearl Directs, and the crowd went wild. This was the *big time*! The standing ovation and yelling seemed like it would never end. The triumphant music track blared on loudly, as people ran forward to take pictures of us. Men hugged their wives closely and whispered promises in their ears. You could see the excitement, belief, and hope on all their faces and in their eyes. Some of the women cried. Every man wanted to make his wife queen for a day, and every woman wanted to feel that special. Patty was my queen, and I was so proud of all the work she had done to help us succeed. She had become a literal wonder woman to pull it all off. This congratulatory experience bonded our lives together, and we felt even closer than before.

We were once again thankful God was using us to inspire others to better their lives. We were allowed to speak for a few minutes. As we had heard many others do, we praised our upline and gave credit to them and the system for our success.

"Is This the Big-Time or What?"

"But you look at this business... Where there is people praying for you, loving you, hugging you, encouraging you. In what other business would the people care?"*

— Amway Crown Jody Victor

The next step was a big one. We bought a tuxedo and gown to wear on stage for

* Jody Victor, *It's Unbelievable*, Stock No. DBR 897

larger seminars. It wasn't long before we were being invited to do full-day seminars as Pearls. This was incredible to us! Once, we had been brand-new, awestruck distributors, attending our own first seminar. Now, we were the speakers at the all-day seminars.

At the Pearl level and above, there was an almost cult-like hero status. Weeks prior to a seminar, Patty and I began receiving many cards and letters from those who would be in attendance. These came from a diverse group, including truck drivers, physicians, single mothers, and many, many others. Most notes were brief, but some folks poured out their hearts to us, even though we had never met them. Almost everyone spoke of being thankful for our time and looked forward to having us share our wisdom with them. Both their upline and the system had taught them all very well. It is of *paramount* importance for distributors to be thankful for their leaders' time.

The organization was constantly reminded that the leaders speaking onstage had willingly chosen to take a day away from their own business and their family to "help" them. Many spoke of this duty as their only way to *give back to the system that had given so much to them*. Tapes were made of the speeches that Patty and I had given. Our enthusiasm made us a very popular drawing card for our upline. We would later learn that Zack was marketing thousands upon thousands of our tapes both domestically and internationally.

We received two letters in one month from distributors in our ever-growing organization to thank us for giving them hope. Both letters shared about how they had been on the verge of suicide before coming into our organization. Being in The Business and hearing us speak gave them hope for the future. We felt humbled that God would be using us to serve His people. How could we feel anything but gratitude for such a mission.

Our organization began to grow exponentially. We now had monthly open (recruitment) meetings at a local hotel. Normally, a Pearl, Emerald, or Diamond would come in to do this presentation. This gave The Business more credibility as young, "retired" speakers rotated through our town. Early on, we had to travel almost two hours to the monthly seminars. Now that we were pulling large numbers of people ourselves, the seminar was moved to our city. We had to rent the local high school auditorium or another large hall to accommodate the growing crowd of distributors.

In light of the results we were getting, we were afforded the opportunity to counsel more and more with Zack and Molly. We discussed these letters with them and Molly told us she and Zack received letters like that almost constantly. This further fueled our desire to become Diamonds; we would more positively impact an even larger group of people. Zack was very clear in letting us know we were now more accountable to God than we had ever been. It was a powerful responsibility we needed to take very seriously. Now, we fully understood why there was a prayer before every seminar and training session. We were God's messengers. The Business was just a vehicle we used to improve people's finances, while we reached them for Christ. It was a bait-and-switch situation, but in a good sense.

Many speakers spoke of being "tricked" into joining The Business to make money. They said now their finances were great, they had a closer walk with the Lord, they were better parents, and had a strong, loving marriage — all as a result of the teachings in The Business. They joked about what a terrible trick we [upline] played on people. This was described as one of the main reasons why Amway and Amway

distributors received criticism and bad press. Whenever God was going to use people to do His will or something good, Satan would do all in his power to try to destroy the efforts. We had to stick together, stay faithful to the system and our upline, and not think negative thoughts. Optimism and positive thought came from God. Fear and doubt come from the depths of Hell itself.

To doubt was a sign of weakness and demonstrated a lack of faith. For our own benefit, we were trained to shut these thoughts out immediately upon recognizing them. Leaders throughout the system spent a great deal of time training us to program our subconscious mind with positive affirmations. Satan wanted us to doubt and not reach more people for God. He would make us feel too tired or lonely when we were away from our families. He would tempt us to quit just before we achieved the Diamond level and won the ultimate victory for the ones we loved the most. All this was happening on one level of our lives. On another deeper level, I felt as though things were falling apart. Oddly enough, the doubts rushed in a few weeks after that moment of our first great success in achieving the Pearl level.

I was tired and frustrated with myself. Things just weren't adding up, and it was harder and harder to banish those negative thoughts. Here we were at a level that very few distributors ever reached, doing an enormous monthly volume, but only making a small fraction of what we had been told to expect. Exhausted from that last month's efforts, we hoped that our first Pearl check would bring the promised rewards. Meanwhile, we continued at a pace beyond belief, and we did not complain.

During the month we had gone Pearl, our organization moved about \$70,000 in goods and services. This was where "the big money" was to kick in. At this point, a new bonus, referred to as a depth bonus was added. Zack had reminded us that this would be our biggest income source. We could not wait to get the check that month. With tremendous enthusiasm, we carried the mail in to our kitchen and opened the envelope together.

We were shocked at what we saw. Our huge depth bonus for doing nearly \$70,000 or more in volume was (if my memory is correct) **\$64 dollars**. There were other bonuses we received for that volume that brought our income for the month near \$2,000, but we were crestfallen.

We had worked incredibly hard to get to this point. How were other Pearls making over \$100,000 annually and retiring? Because of the rules regarding cross lining, that was a dangerous question to ask. It was a dangerous question to even *think*. From all the representations we had heard for years, we had anticipated making \$80,000-\$100,000 at this level. Patty and I were heavily involved in business activities and, combined, were working well over 100 hours many weeks just in The Business. I also had not yet been able to quit my job, so we were physically stretched to the max. There just weren't enough hours in the day. We were doing tens of thousands of dollars in monthly volume, but our income after expenses was not \$80,000 or \$100,000. It was closer to \$20,000 for a superhuman, all-consuming effort. When you figured it out as a per-hour wage, with the taxes we had to pay, we'd be better off flipping burgers at McDonalds.

We knew from all we had been taught that *we* were the problem. There was success all around us. Again and again in leadership meetings, Amway Diamonds would mock the "idiots" who complained about not making enough money.

Believe me, the system propaganda and moral blackmail were very effective. We were taught that if we were concerning ourselves with the success or income of another, it was no wonder we were not making what we wanted to make. According to the teachings, it must be that my focus and my heart were all wrong. Jealousy and envy do not come from God. They were tools the devil used to distract us from our own victory. Someone who concerned himself with the income of another would never make much himself, due to that character flaw.

I felt so conflicted. Here, we were being held up as heroes and successes on stage at large seminars. Tapes of our seminars were being made and sold by the thousands. Inside, I felt like such a failure, because my income did not match what we were told other Pearls were making. I really felt like we were living a double life. Something was missing. I read many of the faith books promoted and sold by our upline. Books by Robert Schuller and Norman Vincent Peale made me think I had to strengthen my faith to truly succeed in all areas of life. At a large Dream Weekend seminar for Amway distributors, there was an emotional Sunday service that ended with an altar call. Hundreds began to move forward. I wanted to go up, but at the same time, I felt paralyzed by fear.

At the last minute, I left my seat and went forward and recommitted my life to Christ. I was working so hard, but something was wrong, because I seemed to be the only person not making a strong income to help my family. From the indoctrination, I believed that I had a spiritual problem: a lack of true faith that was blocking me from being the husband, father, and provider I was called to be.

This was to be the first of several trips I made to the altar over the next few years. Each experience was more emotional than the last. I felt completely drained, not knowing why I was not succeeding. I was desperate to find the solution. Surely, God would hear my prayers. I was spending far more time serving His people than with my own family.

Running with the Big Dogs

Cult characteristic — “Despite the claim for honesty there is use of intimidation or deception on both members and outsiders....despite the claim for openness, there is secrecy.”*

— John Ankerberg and John Weldon

The training or indoctrination at the Pearl level became far more intense and demanding. None of us at this level questioned *anything*. By this point, most of us had unknowingly lost all ability to utilize critical thinking. As a leader at this level, you had to be completely in line philosophically with your upline. **No dissension was allowed.** We began to hear horror stories of Pearls, Emeralds, and even Diamonds who had lost it all

* Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, Harvest House (Eugene, Oregon), 1999, p. xxiv

and even had *jobs* now. They had all gotten their ego out of control and thought they knew more than their upline. They were not team players. Some had decided to cross line and counsel each other. We were told that some former Diamonds even wanted to serve alcohol at the seminars.

Alcohol use was taboo with this group, as was smoking. Very few leaders smoked, and you would never see one consuming alcohol. There seemed to be a very high moral standard set in most areas. The alcohol prohibition did not bother Patty or me, because we were not drinkers. We might share a bottle or two of wine in a year. The only time I would have a bottle of beer was on the rare occasion we met with friends outside of Amway, maybe five or six times a year. I would not purchase it, but would have a beer socially, if offered. It did not seem like a big deal to either Patty or me. We rarely spoke of it, but we both resented what were to become more frequent invasions of our upline's rules into what had been our private life. This was just a business, right?

Zack and I spent more and more time together, as our organization became a good-sized percentage of his enormous business. Zack had slowly begun to replace the other men in my life, becoming a father figure to me. In fact, I wrote Molly and Zack a letter telling them he was the father I had always needed. He guided me and counseled me. More than anything, I wanted to go Diamond to make him proud of me. No one wants to let his father down. Several other men at leadership levels expressed this same bond. Molly related that many men had told her Zack had become their "father figure." I was so thankful to have him as a mentor and coach. I wanted to emulate him perfectly by being the perfect family man, husband, father, son, and loving servant to many.

Those of us who were Zack's protégées studied his every gesture and mannerism and could do his presentation and teaching sessions almost identically. Perfect duplication meant perfect results. This whole business was predicated upon the theory that "if you do what I do, you'll have what I have." I would tell the same jokes with the same verbal inflections and facial and hand gestures. I had listened to his tapes so many times we would joke that I would open my mouth and Zack would come out. I handled challenges exactly as he would with principles he had taught.

I kept telling myself that it was exciting to be part of something great that was making a difference in the lives of others. To have successful Christian mentors was the icing on the cake. Zack and Molly had helped many become wealthy. We just needed to stop doubting and questioning in our own minds and submit fully to their leadership. After all, one routinely reinforced principle was this: your upline can never make any money unless they first helped you to succeed. It had to be a win/win scenario. They would never give you bad advice, because it would hurt them and their business as well.

One more "perk" of being at the Pearl level was we were able to attend high-level leadership meetings with the Diamonds. As Pearls, we were often assigned the duty of hosting these visiting Diamonds. At these late night to early morning leadership meetings, the Diamonds spoke of the incredible lifestyle they and their families shared, since making the decision at Pearl and Emerald to "give it all they had" and move on to Diamond. They spoke of now retiring their parents and taking them on incredible cruises or trips to Hawaii. Some spoke of buying homes and cars for their parents, and one spoke of funding an orphanage.

There was a whole new performance standard expected here. One hundred percent total commitment was the only acceptable example we could reflect as leaders,

particularly if we wanted to stay on the speaking schedule for seminars. As Pearls, we were paid \$600 for doing a seminar, and this extra income certainly helped out. The most important aspect of speaking at these events was that you were clearly acknowledged as being part of the “plugged in” leadership. This gave you more credibility when you went to work within your own organization. People were very excited to invite their friends to a house meeting I was doing, if they had just seen Patty and me speak at a seminar to hundreds or thousands of people.

On three separate occasions, different Diamonds taught us how to keep our hectic and chaotic non-stop schedules from our organizations. The justification was that we were working this hard *by choice*, and they would never have to if they did not personally decide to do it. Zack himself said we should never let our group see our schedule book, because it might scare the average distributor, who did not yet have a big enough dream or understand the big picture. Another Amway Diamond advised us to be like ducks going across a pond. They are calm, collected, and effortless on the surface and are paddling like mad underneath.

Another one of Zack’s Diamonds advised us on how to make lifestyle representations. He instructed us to do things like golf one morning and then talk about it for a month. This gave the impression that you were golfing constantly and would motivate the golfers in the organization who wanted time to play. After all, most of the people in these leadership meetings were “retired” from their jobs and could golf if they wanted. If they chose to work their business day and night, it was their option. No one else **had** to work that schedule.

Movin’ on Up!

The process of edification or building up was taught and reinforced over and over to entry-level distributors. Showing proper respect to upline was *required* of leaders. Distributors were taught always to be both thankful and respectful of their upline’s time. We should even buy gas for our upline when we were out together to demonstrate our respect for their time. We were expected to buy our upline’s meals as well. The reason given for this was the fact that you would benefit more from this time together than they would. The analogy used was this: “when a broke guy and a wealthy guy get together and talk, who will benefit the most?”

A strange shift began to occur after we went Pearl. People in our own organization began to treat us very differently. These were not just faces in a crowd or people we knew casually or from stage. Our closest friends began to treat us in an unusual manner. It was with a reverence that made us uncomfortable. It was not anything like the near-worship given the Diamond-level distributors; yet, it was similar in nature. People who had been like family to us now made certain to tell us how thankful they were for any time we would share with them. They became even more anxious to “counsel” with us.

They always took special care to be on time and insisted on buying us soda, coffee, and our meals when we were out together. They began to share more intimate details of their lives and struggles with us. People outside of our organization did the same. Many knew us from stage and from the seminars we had started doing, and others

knew us because our tapes had gone out to thousands on the tape-of-the-week program. Distributors from as far away as Canada called to tell us they had been inspired by our example. This building up seemed more like “deification,” and we had become the recipients of the adulation.

It made us very uncomfortable, as this hero system gave distributors an almost cultish respect for leaders and an unquenchable thirst and desire to become one of them. We soon had business people, surgeons, pastors, an anesthesiologist, and many others wanting to get advice or counsel from us. There was a sudden perception that we had more wisdom than we actually did. Indeed, we had read and studied an enormous amount of the system materials regarding time management, communication skills, goal setting, and motivation. We had begun to accomplish levels in the business that a very small percentage of distributors achieve despite tremendous effort.

We counseled more frequently with Zack and Molly and were now invited to what was considered the Mecca for distributors. As I said, we were *invited* [attendance was mandatory] to the Pearl/Emerald/Diamond leadership meetings. Here we began to meet and develop relationships with those we had once only admired from a distance. We were now able to learn directly from these millionaires and millionaire makers. These were couples we had come to respect and emulate. The work we had done to achieve this level was incredible. Having shared similar challenges to get to this point gave us all an *esprit de corps*. There was an incredible sense of camaraderie and mutual respect to be one of the few who made it this far.

The high-level distributors would often take off their diamonds and other jewelry and pass them around for us to try on. Molly had a six-carat diamond ring and Zack wore a ten-carat ring. We were told that it was a nearly perfect investment grade stone valued at over \$100,000. He also sported a presidential Rolex with a face, bezel, and band nearly completely diamond encrusted. Molly had a large collection of gowns, shoes, and furs. Zack often spoke of getting into The Business and wanting to have a good car, and at one point later owning over a million dollars in vehicles alone. They lived in what was described as a 10,000-square-foot home appraised at over a million dollars.

The gaudy or ostentatious displays of wealth motivated me in that again and again it demonstrated this business worked. It was not necessary for me to have worked as a Federal Government Auditor to document that Amway worked and in a big way for those willing to put in the effort and take it seriously. We saw the evidence all around us.

Zack and Molly were not an aberration. We were beginning to meet many, many Diamond couples who all spoke of the same incredible lifestyle. Some even had lifestyle videos made professionally that were available to sell to our distributors to help “build the dream.” They were a source of tremendous motivation and encouragement to us all. Building this business was not an easy thing to do and required an enormous amount of physical, mental, and spiritual perseverance. When people from “the outside” told us that there was no money in Amway, we thought they were idiots. Some would even tell us that they never knew anyone who made money in Amway; yet, we knew of well over a hundred millionaires. Some would say it was a small percentage that ever succeed, and I would ask them how many people where they worked retired in their thirties and became wealthy. The answer was always “none.” In this business, we were repeatedly told there was a “100% success rate” for those who plugged into the system and did the work.

One fundamental principle taught in The Business, as a requirement for success, was the ability to “dream build.” This was one habit our upline exposed us to on a regular basis until it became our own. Family, security, and time together were nearly our sole motivations upon entering the Amway business. These remained intact, but others were systematically added as time progressed. One of Dexter Yager’s oft-repeated quotes was, “When the dream is big enough, the facts don’t count.” The dream, as defined by the system and our upline, could not be just freedom or family time. It had to be something physical or tangible. We had to experience what was out there to know why we were working so hard.

We never had an interest in owning a Cadillac; yet that was the car leaders were *expected* to drive. We began to take them out and test drive them and soon *needed* one. This was not just a comfortable car to buy. Again, it was an outward display of loyalty, success, and *manhood*. After counseling with our upline, we got an inexpensive, older used model, and it motivated our group tremendously. Soon, each of them *needed* one. Many went Direct and eventually ended up purchasing Cadillacs or Mercedes.

On one occasion, Molly took Patty and other leaders out to a furrier. Many tried on minks. Patty had never worn a mink, but the picture they took of her wearing a beautiful white and brown trimmed full-length fur that matched her dark-blond hair perfectly gave us a new goal. She looked like a princess in it and said it felt incredible. Male distributors were often told they didn’t have to get a fur for their wife. They were encouraged to remember that their efforts at their *job* bought a fur...only for the boss’s wife or that of a stockholder. That old question haunted me: “Who do you love more?” I began to hate my employer and wanted desperately to succeed in my business to provide these things for Patty, as opposed to someone else’s wife.

Zack took me for a ride in his newly purchased Ferrari. It was appropriately Ferrari Red and handled well even on country roads. He and I went out in his turbo diesel Mercedes SDL and other assorted Mercedes in his personal fleet of luxury cars. After one counseling session, just Zack and I went out in his Prevost coach. Distributors were told it was worth over half a million dollars.

I felt incredibly blessed to have someone this successful mentor me. Success was inevitable. No one was willing to work as hard as I would work! I was coached to laugh at people who told me this business did not work. Such critical people usually slaved away for an oppressive boss who controlled both their time and income. What morons! My entire perspective and fundamental beliefs had begun to change dramatically. Patty and I were thankful for having been enlightened and rescued from a lifetime of employment slavery. We were going to become wealthy and spend all day and every day together.

If we could just work a little harder, I could retire from my job and begin life as a full-time dad. Thank God! That was the dominant thought that kept me going. Patty and I were both so tired and were now used to living in a nearly exhausted state from lack of sleep. I remember barely being able to concentrate at work from being nearly brain dead after days with minimal sleep. On one occasion, I was on the telephone in the office at work, waiting on hold, and I remember thinking they’d better speak loudly when they get on the line, because I was going to sleep. I stared at my computer screen and drifted off until a voice on the line startled me back to consciousness.

This was not uncommon for a leader. Amway Superstar Diamond Randy Haugen related the story of being in a management meeting at work, falling asleep, and actually rolling out of his seat onto the floor. It got to the point where I had pushed myself so hard I hallucinated for the first time. I was driving home from an out-of-town house meeting at about 3 a.m. on a weeknight and had almost made it home. The exhaustion was catching up to me, but home was only a quarter mile away. Suddenly, before me in the middle of the road was the back end of an elephant I was about to slam into at full speed. I stood on the brakes with both feet and skidded to a screeching, violent stop. In my now fully awake state, I realized the gray elephant I had slammed into was actually a thick bank of fog that looked solid in my headlights. I went home a little shaken, but more determined than ever. It never felt so good to kiss my sleeping children and Patty goodnight, as I collapsed into bed for a few precious hours of sleep before work. I knew I just had to quit my job soon.

As leaders, we were getting counseled to build The Business seven days a week. In a private session with Zack and Molly, this directive was strongly reinforced. Patty did not like the fact that I worked on Sundays. That was almost our only family time, if I was home. Zack counseled Patty for almost an hour on getting over this “challenge” in one counseling session. We were told repeatedly that all we had to do to make \$100,000 a year was to go Emerald. Get the job done. No excuses! IF you were a distributor who was not happy with your income, you were advised to look in the mirror to find the person controlling it. This wasn’t like a job where you could blame your situation on your boss, office politics, or the economy. This was the “purest form of free enterprise.”

What’s Your Goal?

“I figured it out folks. If this business didn’t work, I would know by now. I would have figured it out. This business works and in a big, big, big, big, big, big, big, big way.”*

— Amway Crown Jody Victor

Revenge against those who had laughed at you was a motive that was repeatedly reinforced. One Amway Diamond spoke of having his luxury coach polished to tow his Rolls Royce to a high school reunion, to the glee of the audience in attendance. Zack spoke of having his driver take him in his limousine to school to straighten out a teacher who had maligned his son. Power and revenge seemed to be forces that the Diamonds enjoyed dwelling on.

* Jody Victor, *It’s Unbelievable*, Stock No. DBR 897

The Dawning of a New Day

*"In Compassionate Capitalism, Rich DeVos tells you how you can make your dreams come true by centering your life in love of God and country and an authentic desire to help others."**

— Robert Schuller

The pressure to retire from this non-stop, exhaustive schedule was intense. It literally was a matter of survival at that point. I could not go on much longer on this little sleep. It was only a matter of time until I had an accident. Distributors were told to cut out all distractions from their lives. Any distractions could keep you from becoming a Diamond. If it took you even one more year to go Diamond than it should have, this delay would have cost you \$250,000 or more. Distributors were told to cancel their cable TV. Some were actually advised to sell their TVs to raise money to attend seminars.

There were other distractions that could hold you back. Distributors were informed that having any "plan B" constituted a lack of faith. Specifically, if you had investments or another business to fall back on, you must not believe in your heart that you could become a Diamond. Before the large bull market hit, distributors were told that somewhere near "97%" of investors lose money in the stock market. We did not know otherwise and, by that time, we were nearly totally isolated from outside sources of information. Zack stated on multiple occasions that he and Dexter did not have any other investments outside of their Amway businesses until they each went Double Diamond. They could not afford to be distracted.

The credibility and financial magnitude of the business continued to grow. Robert Schuller, famed founder and Pastor of the Crystal Cathedral Church in Garden Grove, California, and host of the Hour of Power television ministry, attended one of our large seminars. He spoke, both on and off stage, of Amway and its leaders with great admiration. "I want to say what an honor it is for me to be at such a great assembly of one of the greatest organizations ever conceived on planet earth... to give everybody a chance to make it. I think the world of the Amway Corporation," he said, "I have been a friend of Jay Van Andel and Rich DeVos almost from the time they started this business."¹

As leaders, we got to spend some personal time with Pastor Schuller backstage. He was very tall and very gentle. It was a thrill to be able to meet some of our real-life heroes. These were the kind of people we wanted to model ourselves after. He had made a difference for God by serving many others. We felt so fortunate to be part of this incredible organization. There seemed to be an unending number of confirmations we

* DeVos, Rich, Compassionate Capitalism (Endorsement by Robert Schuller)

¹ *Strive* tape CE-83, Robert Schuller

were at the right place at the right time.

We would, on occasion, run into a prospect or family member of a distributor who thought Amway was a cult. Amway a cult? That was the most moronic thing I had ever heard. I could not even understand why someone would say something so stupid. Here is a business where people open every seminar with a prayer and a pledge to the flag. I had never been around more godly people of integrity. These people, particularly the Amway Diamonds, worked tirelessly as servants to their organizations to help them succeed. Here we have key religious figures and even former Presidents of the United States endorsing Amway with glowing praise, and some nuts want to call us a cult. It seemed ludicrous to us, but this topic did come up on occasion. (Several years later, I myself would have to spend days with a renowned cult expert and over a year in recovery to *begin* to be deprogrammed from my involvement in an Amway motivational cult.)

We were taught how to address this issue. In one leadership training, Zack spoke on this subject. He mocked anyone stupid enough to even repeat something this foolish. He explained that, in a cult, everyone does what the leader says to do. If that were the case, we would all be rich! We all laughed and took the point well. If we all could follow his direction more closely, we would be wealthy. In spite of the automatic cultic response, I could not comprehend why someone would even mention cultism. It must be some perception of Amway from 20 years ago following it around like an urban legend of sorts. We were constantly reminded that the average person would criticize above-average achievement to justify his or her own laziness and lack of success.

The media was routinely blasted as an enemy of sorts. We learned, and later taught our group, that the media was a business. What sells, the truth or the sensational? Sensationalism sells, even if it is completely devoid of all truth. The media, with its liberal slant, was an effective, powerful tool in destroying the efforts of conservatives, who wanted to make this country a better place for our children's future. Key players in the media were often maligned as idiots.

We needed to control our psychological environment. Our minds were very much like a computer — garbage in, garbage out. We move in the direction of our most dominant thought, so we had to control what we thought about on a regular basis. This is why *the system* was so vital in keeping us focused. We needed to listen to at least one tape every day.

We could *never* afford to miss a monthly seminar, even after nearly a decade in the business. Your group would duplicate what you would do. The entire organization was constantly reminded to follow and work with their *plugged in* upline. *Plugged in* is a reference used to describe a distributor who was completely loyal to the system in listening to the tapes, reading approved books, attending all functions, and in line with his upline. There was no room for ego here. If you missed a seminar, someone in your organization could later duplicate your bad example. Not a good idea!

No leader would ever miss a monthly seminar for any reason. The standing joke was, the only legitimate reason you could ever miss a seminar was for a death in the family or... your own. As a matter of fact, in a talk about commitment, Zack related the story of Arnold Schwarzenegger missing his own father's funeral, because he had a very important competition he had prepared for. His mother *understood* his dedication and now was now proud, as Arnold was a hero who could provide well for her. Winners instinctively understand *total commitment* and losers question it and make excuses.

Getting with the Party Line

*"Some of the greatest growth experiences is when we were late with our mortgage payment because we were covering our orders. We didn't understand it at that time. We thought, 'Hey we're not covering our mortgage payment, we're covering our orders. What's this all about?' I'd rather owe the bank than my upline. I'd rather not ever, ever have my upline unhappy with me."**

— Amway Crown Jody Victor

Patty and I had worked hard before our Amway involvement to accumulate some rental units to build equity for a retirement nest egg. We were only in our twenties but knew we had to begin to plan and invest early in life. However, we eventually became convinced that these properties were simply a distraction that would keep us from becoming financially free. The many Amway millionaire Diamonds could not all be wrong. They, too, had dumped all distractions and focused solely on what would give them the greatest return on investment (Amway). Many repeated the same basic philosophy in their own way. Once again, they had the lifestyle to back up the success of this business principle. I was a "broke" guy with a few rental properties and a lot of ambition. We soon sold these properties and used this money to pay off all of our debts.

Outside of our mortgage, we were debt free. We had paid off our car loans, college loans, credit cards, and consumer debts. We certainly were now getting closer to our freedom! The magical day was approaching. I'll never forget the excitement I had when I went into our bedroom, closed the door, and called Zack for *his permission* to retire from my job. Zack is a very detail oriented man. We discussed my current income from my profession, my Amway income as a Pearl, our monthly expenses, the number of distributors we had personally sponsored, the total number of distributors in our group on the tape-of-the-week program, and the number we had attending monthly seminars. I will never forget the excitement I felt when he told me I could retire from my job. I was going to be a full-time dad! He had me schedule it so he and Molly could come and speak at my retirement party.

I hung up the phone and let out a yell Patty heard at the other end of the house. We had both worked so incredibly hard to get to this point. We were Pearls on the way to becoming Emerald. We were not making much income as Pearls, but had almost no debt, and soon we were going to be making well over \$100,000 as new Emeralds! We could hardly contain our excitement. I typed up my resignation letter dated September 25, 1992. I gave my employer over one month's notice and made arrangements to part on good terms. This gave us plenty of time to plan my retirement party.

Our family was finally happy. This was the moment we all worked so hard and so long for. Even our children had sacrificed for this moment. They had learned not to ask for any product that did not come from *our* business. They were willing to eat off-brand,

* Jody Victor, *It's Unbelievable*, Stock No. DBR 987

Amway-purchased cereal that they did not like. They had learned to eat vitamins from Amway that they hated taking. Our son, Adam, had become accustomed to my almost complete absence from the home. He and our young daughter, Rachel, were good little troopers and almost never complained. They knew it was going to be worth it. We were going to play baseball together, go on picnics, and travel as a family now. My resignation was to be effective October 30, 1992. Each day seemed to be an eternity, as we all anxiously anticipated the arrival of my actual retirement date.

Word got out and the group seemed to be as electrified by this event as did our own family. *The dream was real!* We had heard this phrase again and again at seminars and on tapes. Our distributor force was energized by the clear belief that each of them could earn his or her own freedom. They were literally as excited as Patty and I were. That was the beauty of this business. Success breeds success. In the normal corporate business world, if one person succeeds, it is because he took the place that, now, no others could fill. In *our* business, the more people succeeded, the easier it was for those who followed to succeed. No one in our organization, to this point, had been willing to work as hard as we did. Now, many were both motivated and had the faith to go do *whatever it took* to get the job done.

We began making plans for the big celebration. A large hall was rented, as Zack and Molly were coming to speak at our retirement dinner. A limousine was rented to pick me up at work my last day. I had pictured this scene in my mind's eye 1000 times, during all those lonely, late nights driving home from meetings. Thank God, I was finally going to be able to get some sleep. I missed my beautiful wife so much. What a blessing it was going to be, to be able to spend time together! This was all going to have been worth it.

It was our hope that this event would not bring glory or light upon us, but that it would shed light to our group on the incredible possibilities their own futures held. We were going to press on to Emerald and then Diamond and bless thousands in the process, just as Zack and Molly had. This was like a fairy-tale dream come true. I felt sorry for those poor, misinformed people who had criticized our participation in this great business. They were relegated to a lifetime of servitude to an employer who would forever control both their time and their income.

We could hardly sleep the night before my last day at the large insurance company where I worked. Patty and I felt like kids at Christmas. An incredible, wonderful life was about to begin in the next 24 hours.

We awoke early, hearing this enormous commotion outside our home about 5 a.m. It was a surprise party being thrown by a whole group of our distributors. We quickly got dressed and went downstairs and talked about freedom. We watched videos of trips to places like Hawaii and Australia. All the distributors there had, in their own minds, a clear vision of what their freedom was going to be like.

The big goal of more sleep was a huge motivator for many of us who were driving ourselves to near exhaustion. We videotaped my last day with an alarm clock — an event that would later be described to thousands of distributors. The clock was hooked to an extension cord and placed on a stump in our back yard. The alarm was set and the camera zoomed in as it went off. As it sounded its annoying wake-up call, I hit it with a single blast from a shotgun that a distributor had brought for the occasion. The clock literally vanished. Playing this tape and recounting the story would bring cheers from crowds of distributors, who all were visualizing their day of freedom. This was a powerful, symbolic

act that I had dreamed of for years.

I went to work as usual. My co-workers were very kind and gave me a small going-away party with gifts and a card I treasured. I worked in a very large glass building. I knew the limousine must have arrived when I looked up from my desk and saw about 50 people pressed against the windows on one side of the building. I quickly changed into my tuxedo and began to walk from my desk towards my family and the freedom we had fought so hard for. One wonderful surprise was the reaction of my co-workers. Understand it was not easy for them to see someone my age retiring and walking out to a limo. As I walked from my desk towards the door, like a scene out of a movie, they each slowly stood up and began clapping. Some had made fun of us for being in Amway. Now they were willing to cheer for our victory. I was overwhelmed by their kind response.

As I walked nearer to the door, I could see out the second story window down to the parking lot area. It was an incredible sight. There was a large white limousine and a huge number of our friends, all holding large helium filled red, white, and blue balloons. The sight took my breath away. I walked down the stairway and took a moment to compose myself. A loud cheer went out from the group as I walked out of the building towards the parking lot. Video cameras were rolling everywhere. Someone opened the limousine door and out stepped Patty, looking more beautiful than I had ever seen her before. She was absolutely radiant. She was holding Adam's hand and carrying our daughter, Rachel. The large crowd parted in the middle to make way for them. Adam broke free from Patty's gentle grasp and ran to me with a bear-hug tackle that almost knocked me over. Someone yelled, "Free at last, Eric!" Someone else set off fireworks, and the crowd simultaneously released their freedom-colored balloons into the waiting powder-blue sky. People were laughing and giving hugs and "high fives" to each other and to us. Many eyes were filled with tears of joy. This was truly a miraculous day. We got into the limousine and pulled out of my place of employment for the last time. Dad was going home. I was a free man — or so I thought.

A parade of our Direct Distributors and others in Cadillacs followed us to our home for a celebration party. Every moment of the day was recorded on video so we could use this spectacular event as a motivational tool to help others realize the unlimited potential in this wonderful business. It was clear that God had honored the desires of our hearts, as we saw not only our own lives, but also the lives of our many friends transformed that day.

Patty did not know it, but I had a very special surprise prepared for early that evening. We celebrated with all of our friends. As might be expected, all of our friends were now only people in The Business. We enjoyed a great party that, of course, did not have any alcohol. Alcohol was for people who had no hope. We shared tremendous hope and an unlimited future. None of us had a need to dull our senses. One by one, each of our friends eventually left the party. What Patty did not know was that they were all reuniting at another location for one of the most important moments in our married life.

I had told Patty that a couple in our group was having their baby baptized that night. We dressed for the occasion and headed over to our church with Adam and Rachel. Patty was pregnant with our third child, Hannah, at the time. She looked beautiful. Both sides of the street were nearly filled with cars parked top to bottom, but we found a parking spot and headed quickly toward the steps of our church, as it looked like we were late. I reached down and grasped the brass door handle, my heart pounding, and I opened

the door for Patty.

The church was completely filled with all of our friends and family. Unbeknownst to Patty, they were all gathered there to share in our re-exchanging of our wedding vows. We were beginning a whole new life together and I wanted to do so in the presence of God and all those we loved. It was an incredible moment in time. Here we were surrounded by a large group of people, where each seemed like a member of our family. We stood together at the same altar where we had originally exchanged our wedding vows. This time Patty and I held each other's hand and the little hands of our children.

It had all been worth it. It was incredible to tearfully and emotionally re-affirm our love for one another. What a blessing it was to know we would now be able to spend each day together. It was hard to believe all our dreams were finally coming true. We felt very fortunate and blessed. This certainly was the happiest day of our lives. It is difficult to even describe the euphoric feeling we shared as we nearly floated from the altar down the aisle to our new life.

Just Exactly Who Are You Anyway?

"Amway is an equal opportunity for everyone in this room regardless of what your background may be."*

— Dick DeVos

We were soon enjoying the fruits of our newfound freedom. It was incredible to be able to sleep until we were both rested. What a concept! We had both gone on very little sleep for years. It was a true joy to begin to spend time together as a family. We had missed each other so much in the years I had worked both day and night. It actually felt odd to not be *completely* exhausted. It was wonderful for Patty to have me home, and she was no longer single-handedly taking care of our entire household.

The training we had received and continued to absorb in the Amway system was powerful in several ways. We had developed strong interpersonal and management skills. We had become effective motivators, and good time and money managers. We learned to seek out and see the solution in every challenge. As a matter of fact, we learned that there were no problems, only challenges. Challenges were simply opportunities for greater personal growth. We had trained our minds by now to instinctively block out nearly all negative thoughts. Our spiritual beliefs and faith grew in tandem with the above skill sets.

We learned how to effectively interact with all types of people. A company, Personality Insights, Inc., was brought in to help train distributors in recognizing, communicating with, and motivating each of the different personality types. We received this specialized training from Dr. Rohm, who on stage was a charismatic, humorous, brilliant educator. Off stage, he revealed himself as a very kind, compassionate, Christian businessman. We essentially attended to all his needs for a weekend, and he was a joy to work with. Dr. Rohm brought tremendous credibility to The Business and its related

* Amway Special Guest Speakers D. DeVos, B. Kerkstra Stock No. GDL 96-21

success *system*. His open praises of *the system* were extremely powerful, because he was an outsider with a great deal of business acumen. The fact that he was very well known in Christian leadership was icing on the cake.

Direct Contact

"We don't care what your faith is. We don't care if you claim to have not faith. Build the business...you'll...change to what God wants you to be."*

— Crown Ambassador Dexter Yager

As Pearls, we began to have direct contact with Dexter and Birdie Yager at high-level leadership meetings once or twice a year. Spending any time with Dexter and Birdie was the Amway business equivalent of going to Mecca. We knew they had helped hundreds of people become millionaires and multi-millionaires in the Amway business. We were advised that they had helped thousands of people go Direct who were not even in their own organization. Because of the incredible success of the *Yager System*, many outside of his organization had requested permission to plug into his *system* of books, tapes, and seminars. While Dexter had actually helped thousands go Direct in other organizations, he never received a penny for it — or so we were informed.

This type of story was repeated often and reminded us of how fortunate we were to be part of his organization and teachings. Distributors were told Dexter was the most successful distributor not only in Amway, but also in the global history of all multi-level marketing businesses. The percentages changed at times, but a common representation was that as much as 90 percent of Amway's multi-billion-dollar revenues came from Dexter's Amway distributorship.

Once a year, Zack and Molly would have Dexter and Birdie speak at a large "Yager Spectacular" seminar for thousands of distributors. Zack was a multi-millionaire, but remained humble and always stressed his total loyalty to Dexter. Zack told us often how important it was that he still counseled with Dexter. He was making a million dollars a year and still sought wise counsel. If Zack did this at his level, we all certainly needed to counsel with him on a regular basis. Dexter was often referred to as the master teacher.

Patty and I were very excited about our first high-level leadership meeting with Dexter. Zack began what we would come to know as a ritual about a month before Dexter spoke. Zack explained that not everyone understood Dexter, because he was so incredibly intelligent and successful. It was described as difficult for Dexter to come down and speak on a level the for the average guy to understand. Consequently, he was often misunderstood.

One frequently used anecdote that kept people from questioning Dexter was this: as Zack often told, some *broke guy* was questioning why Dexter was wearing a polka-dot shirt in his picture in the *Profiles of Success*. To agree with or even acknowledge a comment like that would be de-edifying to Dexter. Zack told the guy that polka-dot shirts

* Dexter & Birdie Yager, Stock No. FED 94-12, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

were in style at Dexter's income level. He told the *broke guy* that Dexter owned several hundred apartments like the one the guy lived in, so he would not expect the guy to understand the style that Dexter was accustomed to. Another common phrase was used if anyone questioned the fact that Dexter sported a beard. Facial hair was taboo in Amway. No leaders were permitted to have facial hair. If others questioned Dexter's beard, we were to tell them that when they were as big in the business as he is, they could grow a beard, too.

The bottom line is that anyone who questioned upline, but particularly Dexter, was considered to be either stupid, broke, or both. We heard these stories repeated again and again every time Dexter was about to join us. We had been well indoctrinated by then. We had listened to over 1000 hours of tapes and seminars. We questioned almost nothing by this point and were amazed that anyone would even *think* to question someone as successful as Dexter. After all, he was a great Christian servant who had succeeded only as a result of helping others succeed all over the world.

The big day of our first leadership meeting with Dexter soon came. Our sponsors, Kerry and Chris, had gone Pearl and had gotten to the meeting just before us. They sat right in the front row. None of the four of us had any conception of what we were in for. As it turns out, you never sit in the front row at a meeting with Dexter. You never knew what was going to happen, as Kerry and Chris were soon to discover. Thank God, Patty and I sat in the second or third row from the front.

Zack warmed up the group of about 30 Pearls, Emeralds, and Diamonds. He was very solemn and almost reverent as he spoke of Dexter and his undying loyalty to him. Experienced distributors around us chuckled at the fact that our sponsors had sat in the front row and advised us that it was going to be a long night. We thought that was great. The more time we got to spend with Dexter, the better. After all, he was a millionaire maker and could be anywhere in the world right now, but had chosen to be with us.

Dexter started to speak at about 10 p.m. that night. It was exciting, as he was warm and friendly. He seemed very at ease and spoke to us with compassion, almost as a father would to his children. But, we soon moved into an area of his talk that I can only describe as bizarre. He began to speak of the many steady girlfriends he had in high school. I think the highest number of steady girlfriends we heard about was 100. He began to tell stories about his childhood and then more stories about girlfriends. These accounts seemed to go on endlessly with no point.

I looked around and people were smiling and nodding, and some were actually taking notes. What could they *possibly* be writing down? From the atmosphere in the room, it was obvious he was a very powerful man. There was almost a sense of fear present, or at least a feeling that went well beyond normal respect. It was after midnight when Dexter stood directly in front of Kerry and Chris and looked at Chris closely. He bent over and stuck his face right in front of Kerry's and asked him if Chris was his wife. The room went silent. None of us knew what was coming next. Dexter commented that Chris was attractive and got eyeball to eyeball with Kerry and asked if he could kiss her.

You could have heard a pin drop. Time seemed to stop as Kerry hesitated to answer. We did not know what the correct answer was. Would it demonstrate loyalty to let Dexter kiss your wife? The tension in the room was electric. The silence seemed to go on forever, as Kerry seemed to begin to perspire. Kerry finally blurted out, "No!" and the room went silent again. Dexter acknowledged that Kerry had given the right answer, and

we all breathed a quiet sigh of relief. Dexter then went off on some long tangent about respect or love or commitment. Who knows? It was now nearly 2 a.m., and he was still droning on about nonsense. Our eyes were rolling up in our heads.

We were all struggling to stay awake. There were no notes that he worked from, and it was often difficult to even identify the topic in your own minds. However, we knew better than to question this in either public or private. Zack closed the meeting and reminded us how fortunate we had been and hoped we had all grasped “the message.” We were too tired to even begin to wonder if there had been a message. We just wanted to surrender ourselves to the pillows in our hotel room as soon as possible. Several years later, I learned about the effects of deliberate sleep deprivation, in which the senseless seems to make sense, and the bizarre becomes acceptable.

Dexter himself seemed to possess an unusual mixture of bizarre idiosyncrasies and credibility. He told of having Ronald Reagan speak at the seminars. He spent a great deal of time talking about the occasions when former presidents had the opportunity to meet *him*. He often spoke of the presidential tie tack that former president George Bush had given him. It was surprising to hear how well connected Dexter and many other of the high-level Amway distributors were. Dexter spent a great deal of time talking about religion and his ultra-conservative political agenda.

He seemed incredibly hardcore in most of his beliefs. We were soon to learn exactly why Zack had prepared us psychologically not to question Dexter, and we later would also teach other distributors to do the same. The majority of our active distributors showed up the next day for the general admission seminar. Dexter and Birdie were brought onstage with tremendous fanfare and applause. You would have thought from the crowd’s wild reaction that they were greeting a rock superstar. They stood and cheered in a rousing standing ovation for what seemed like five minutes. We were extremely excited that our organization was going to learn from the one who had been described to us as *the master teacher*.

Dexter started out slowly and seemed to be relating rather well. He told many stories of the old days when he and Birdie struggled. His talk soon shifted with incredible force into his political agenda. This was a pattern we would soon become accustomed to. At one of these meetings, with thousands of distributors in attendance, Dexter informed the audience that he had distributors in The Business in high levels in the government. He even told the group present he had connections with Secret Service agents who worked in the White House. These agents had advised him that Hillary Clinton was a **lesbian** and that she slept in her own private bedroom — separate from Bill’s. The agents, he said, had told him our tax dollars were being used to shuttle Hillary’s lesbian lovers in and out of the White House. We would hear this saga repeated often by both Zack and Dexter at other leadership meetings.

At this meeting and many others, Democrats were often characterized as mindless idiots, bent on socialism and the destruction of the moral fabric of this country. We lost a good number of distributors after this seminar. If you did not eventually change your way of thinking from Democrat to Republican, there really was no room for you in Amway. To stay in Amway and remain a Democrat would subject you to almost constant derision and mockery. I do not ever remember hearing any Amway Diamond speak who was anything but a conservative Republican. It almost seemed like a requirement.

The conservative Republicans seemed very eager to rally around Amway. Former

president Gerald R. Ford said,

*“Amway distributors are dramatic proof that the American spirit of free enterprise is, and will continue to be, a vibrant force for good at home and around the world.”**

We were not strongly tied to one political party or the other upon entering Amway. Patty and I were very proud of the fact that this many important political figures fully endorsed, with their own reputations, The Business we were now staking our family’s future upon.

There seemed to be an endless parade of very important political, religious, and business leaders who were anxious to endorse the Amway business. R. Craig Hoenshell is chairman and CEO of Avis, which has been described as one of the largest and most respected car rental companies. He related about Amway:

“Everyone knows that at Avis, ‘We Try Harder’ for the customer. It’s the way to be the preeminent car rental company. Same thing with Amway. Independent Business Owners are part of a great enterprise. They can count on Amway to be there — always working harder to make it as easy as possible for individuals to succeed in a business of their own. Avis and Amway have a lot in common.”²

Jerry Falwell came and spoke at an Emerald- and Diamond-only meeting for Dexter. He was charismatic and well spoken, despite the picture the media had painted of him as someone on the religious lunatic fringe. It seemed as if any of us who were going to do something good for our family, our God, or our country were going to be subject to criticism. My respect for Mr. Falwell grew tremendously as he spoke. He talked of enjoying talk shows where it was just him, Jesus, and a bunch of liberals slugging it out. He spoke highly of our Amway business leaders and the foundational principles that Amway was built upon. He described socialism as “shared poverty.”³ We epitomized the exact opposite of that.

The credibility of The Business increased at an incredible pace. Distributors were told Amway’s global estimated retail revenues were growing at a rate of almost a billion dollars a year. There was talk of Amway becoming a trillion-dollar company.

There was one concept distributors would hear echoed over and over, again and again in different words at seminars and on tapes: *Never, never, never give up; never quit. Quitters never win and winners never quit. Your greatest victory is just beyond your greatest challenge. Persist and win. Your God, your family, your group, and your country are all counting on you.*

* Take Charge of Your Future brochure SA-217, Copyright 1997, Amway Corporation

² Achieve Magazine, October 1999

³ Author’s Notes Yager Emerald leadership conference 1998

I Think I Can! I Think I Can!

*"Having known many successful individual who are practitioners of free enterprise, there are few as successful, as committed to the basic tenets of capitalism and especially 'compassionate capitalism,' as Rich DeVos. It is a mark of Rich's commitment that he shares his 'personal credo' with us and with generations yet to come."**

— Alexander Haig, Jr.

Despite the locomotive-like force of credibility and Amway's burgeoning billions of sales, we had some serious *challenges* that would not go away. Soon after we went Direct, our sponsors, Kerry and Chris, seemed to pull away from us. They no longer did much at all in our organization in terms of showing the plan or follow-ups. They began to treat us almost as if we had done something wrong when our organization took off in terms of growth.

We soon found ourselves being corrected constantly for the most minor infraction of the rules as prescribed by *the system*. When we counseled with Zack, he seemed to know intuitively what our challenges were. It was uncanny. He had a deep penetrating stare and seemed almost to be able to *read our minds*. These counseling sessions became more intense in nature. He reminded us at nearly every session that Kerry and Chris were *our* leaders, and we needed to be humble and follow them. We could not expect our group to follow our leadership if we were renegades or even appeared to be out from under their leadership. Patty and I did not care about who was considered the leader, as we were always team players and did not have any concern for who got the credit. We just wanted to build a big business to help our friends and take care of our family.

When we went Ruby, which was a pin level Kerry and Chris never achieved, more serious problems began. We went on to develop a large organization and went Emerald before they did. Kerry later, half jokingly, told us he wanted to send us a dead fish when we did this. Our success should have been a feather in his cap. It was a testimony to their having taught us the system so well. Instead, it appeared we were in competition and a threat to them. They went from being great friends and encouragers to bosses who kept us at a distance. Their leadership talks, which had once been inspirational and motivational, became incredibly hardcore. They seemed to move from just being loyal and committed to bordering on the lunatic fringe in relatively short order.

As speakers who had once uplifted the group, they now blasted them for not doing

* DeVos, Rich, Compassionate Capitalism, (Endorsement by Alexander Haig, Jr.)

more or being loyal enough. Training sessions dissolved into a McCarthy Era-like search for the disloyal. Kerry made many talks stating things like “you have not been loyal until you have had the chance to be disloyal but have remained faithful.” **He** was the most loyal to Zack and wanted everyone to know it. He even said on multiple occasions he would gladly take a bullet for Zack. This was nuts. The rest of their own organization dwindled as a result of this shift in perspective. Soon, there were very few people at all left in their organization outside of our group.

We were beginning to lose people as well. We had begun recruiting many credible professionals into our organization — physicians, surgeons, accountants, financial planners, attorneys, teachers, police officers, and others. We even had some millionaires in our organization. When they heard our presentation, they were impressed enough to join. One of the keys for growth was to *sponsor at your level and above* in terms of credibility and social standing. The logic was simple. The greater the credibility you had in distributors in your group, the easier it was to recruit other like-minded people. We were moving quickly beyond the old door-to-door stereotype of the past.

However, our training sessions *had* to be led by Kerry and Chris, as they were the upline leaders for our area, even though they had lost most of their personal business because of their management style. This became progressively worse. At one training session, Kerry dictated that to succeed required *absolute* commitment to the system. People needed to listen to two tapes a day, every day, including Christmas, according to him. This was insane. This was a faith-based business, and here he was telling my organization that they all had to listen to two Amway business tapes on Christmas day or they weren’t going to cut it.

He then continued his talk on total loyalty. The example he used we would eventually hear many times. His entire family had planned to gather from several states to have a family portrait done as a special gift for the parents. This was planned months in advance to assure all could attend. At the last minute, Zack called and invited Kerry and me to a secretive leadership meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina, with Dexter Yager and some key Diamonds. Kerry cancelled on his family and left them all to gather in our town. His wife took his place in the family picture. The rest of his family was furious. With pride, he said “My own brother thinks that I am in a cult.” Total commitment and an unquestioning loyalty to your *upline* were *required* in order to win.

We had successful professionals actually get up and walk out while Kerry was talking. I was in a state of disbelief. What about loyalty to your family? Isn’t that what this was all about? Patty and I had gone to Zack and Molly again and again on this issue. We needed help desperately. We were sponsoring success-minded people from all walks of life by describing a secondary income source they could develop into a six-figure residual income stream that could be passed on to their children. They were excited. Then, they go to a training session and hear someone raving about taking a bullet for their upline and listening to business tapes on Christmas day. What was this becoming?

At first, we felt these challenges could be overcome. Zack had promoted himself as a problem solver. He had told us if we were uncomfortable with anything to come to him and he would help us resolve it. Patty and I decided we needed to bring this situation up tactfully, right after we went Ruby. Zack and Molly were now like parents to us, and we trusted their counsel without reserve. In any event, they would only benefit if they helped us succeed. We prepared for the meeting and went to their mansion to counsel

with great anticipation. We could resolve this and move right on to Diamond.

We were dumbfounded and very much confused by what happened next. We began talking and going over our goal sheet as usual. Zack was a detail man and always wanted to know how our business was doing. We needed to have our numbers ready to show him how many tapes-of-the-week our group was buying and how many seminar tickets were being sold for the monthly meetings. These figures and the number of Amway kits sold in a month were described as the pulse of our business. The volume of goods and services a group purchased always trailed behind the sale of books, tapes, and seminar tickets.

We finally got to the end of the normal counseling topics, and Zack asked if there was anything else we needed to ask him. We confided that we were having a challenge with people being offended by Kerry's now almost militant talks and that some were actually quitting over it. We gave quite a few specific instances in a very respectful way. For some reason, it had become very easy for Patty and me to relate to the masses both in person and from stage, but Kerry and Chris seemed to be struggling. Zack smiled and with a penetrating stare gave us nearly a two-hour lecture using analogies we would become far too familiar with in the coming years.

First, Zack assured us there really was no problem outside of our own perceptions. A couple of people may have misunderstood Kerry. We always needed to protect our upline in situations like this. You **never** agree with downline. It was like in a family, Zack explained. A husband and wife should always support one another and show a united front to the children. This benefits not only the children but also the family as a whole. Most people were not mature enough to put their own ego aside to do what is right for the team, which is ultimately what is right for them as an individual. An individual team member could not win if the team lost, right?

Zack asked us if anyone had ever misunderstood anything we had ever said in our lives. Of course, the answer was "yes." Would we like everyone in our group criticizing our every move and action? Of course not. Were we perfect and above making mistakes? There was only ever one perfect man (Jesus), and look what they did to Him. We should treat and protect Kerry and Chris as we would like to be treated and protected by our people. They, after all, were the ones who had given us a chance to be free. We needed to work harder to build them up better and shut off any distributor who might criticize them. Some people are just stupid and look to nit-pick or criticize any achiever in life.

They reinforced over and over that Kerry and Chris had been in The Business longer than we had and were seasoned leadership. They had also spent a great deal of time with Zack. Talking to Kerry, because he was so incredibly loyal and *plugged in*, was in most cases like talking to Zack directly. Kerry did not make a single move without Zack's prior approval. We needed to learn to appreciate them as people and focus on their strengths. That is what God would have us do. Satan would like to see us separated and divided in leadership in order to confuse the group and prevent us from reaching and serving others.

We stung a little from the talk, but were thankful for the correction. Part of us thought Zack did not truly understand the magnitude of the challenge, but he did help us refocus on the positive. Zack and Molly ended the session by praising us, our future, our potential, and our growing organization. They again reassured us of their love for us and embraced Patty and me warmly as we left their house.

We were a little shell-shocked on the way home, but realized the apparent error of our ways. We had always been team players and had continuously given Kerry and Chris the credit for our success, even though we had built our group on our own from around the 4000 PV level. We needed to be better downline members and better leaders, setting a strong example for those who looked to us for leadership. We were growing in many areas, and perhaps this was one we needed to work on.

The Business was obviously working. Zack and Molly purchased a private island in the Thousand Island area of Canada. We heard about it in great detail and were eventually invited for a weekend with our leaders. One of Zack's island employees picked us up in an antique wooden boat. It was one of several showpiece boats that had come with the island. We motored for about a mile and were mesmerized by what we saw as we approached his island. It was incredible! What a beautiful piece of paradise! We did not know places like this existed. The island had three separate homes on it. One was the main house and had about seven bedrooms. The other was a guest cottage, and the third was a home that the island staff lived in.

Zack announced that he and his family would be spending most of their summers there. We were all asked to sign a guest registry as we went into the main home. As a former Federal Auditor, I knew this was to document business use of the property for tax purposes. I mentioned to Zack that he must be able to write off a good percentage of this secondary residence/private island, since he used it on occasion for trips like this. He informed me that this was *not* a secondary residence. This was a business conference center. I knew Zack had a lot of business savvy, but I would hate to defend a luxury island in the middle of the St. Lawrence Seaway to an IRS field auditor.

Go Get 'Em, Tiger!

*"The purpose of the tapes, of course, is to understand the Amway business."**

— Amway Diamond Bonnie Howard

The training we were beginning to receive in terms of time management, sales, communication, and goal setting was effective. We were trained in person, from Zack and Molly, from tapes, from training sessions, and large seminars. I went from being somewhat shy to speaking to crowds of thousands with ease. I learned to contact strangers at malls and convenience stores to prospect them for The Business. The more we pushed and stretched what we thought was possible, the more we were able to do. We learned how to meet people and develop an immediate rapport with them. We actually got good enough to meet and sponsor complete strangers into our organization. They would later become good friends.

One particular skill set that was a necessity in communicating effectively was learning and remembering names. This did not come naturally to me. However, we learned the sweetest sound a person can hear is his or her own name. It creates a feeling

* Amway Diamond Bonnie Howard, **Ladies Session Saturday Morning**, Stock No. GDL 95-1

of value and respect. As I was doing Amway recruitment meetings nearly every night in hotels and homes, I had lots of opportunities to practice. Like any muscle you develop, the memory gets stronger the more you use it. Eventually, I was able to walk into a room and meet ten or twelve strangers and refer to them individually by name, in any order, in the course of a presentation.

This amazed people, because it showed I cared about them as human beings, not just as prospects I wanted to sell on our business. We learned not only to develop rapport, but also to quickly bond with people as they came into The Business. We wanted them to feel more loved and accepted with us than anywhere else in their life. The whole organization became an incredibly close group of friends. They were like a family; a perfect, accepting, loving family.

Many active distributors had gradually, unnoticeably shed nearly all relationships outside of the group. It seemed like a natural progression. Many of us had become so busy with work, training sessions, leadership meetings, trips, and showing the plan that we had no time for any social life outside of The Business. The Business *was* our social life. We felt more comfortable with people in The Business than with anyone else.

We thought critically of former friends and even our own family members, condemning them as being lazy. They were on a crash collision with failure and did not seem to care. We were doing something wonderful with our lives by owning our own businesses and helping others succeed. The more criticism others heaped on us for being Amway distributors, the more committed we were to the cause. The cumulative effect of over a thousand hours of tapes, videos, and seminars in the system was gradual, but powerful. We had unknowingly internalized most all of the prescribed businesses paradigms. *“All Democrats were evil, stupid people. Attorneys were truly bad. Anyone who used an attorney to sue someone else was a socialist, wanting to take what someone else had earned. Lawyers were bloodsuckers, and the only lawyers that were good were ones that had gone Diamond and had now renounced their former profession.”*

Many distributors actually began to detest their employers for taking advantage of them and reaping the harvest of their employees' labor. People often spoke of how hard they worked for years with little or no respect only to have the owner and his wife go to Hawaii, while they stayed back to watch his business. Who do you love, your wife or the wife of your boss? Where should your priorities be? Should they be in his business or in yours where you could reap tremendous rewards and take *your* family on wonderful trips? One of the most often repeated slogans was in reference to walking the beaches of the world together.

This shift in perceived business ownership caused several of our Direct distributors to get fired or quit their jobs under bad circumstances. In their minds, they were choosing between supporting their family's future or their boss's. One Direct could not get the weekend off for a Dream Weekend seminar and decided *his* business was more important than his employer's. He gave his employer an ultimatum and was promptly fired. Another one of our Directs was fired for using the company vehicle, business contacts, and the cell phone for his Amway business. He lost his job, his company truck, and his self esteem all in one day. To us, it made him more loyal and committed.

A Dream Come True

*"We are going to control the World economy from this business."**

— Jeff Yager

While these things were happening, we actually were taking many "lifestyle-type" trips with the same people. We began to travel and did walk many beaches of the world with our new friends. Our group was now our family and we loved traveling together. At the Direct level, trips were sponsored or organized by both Walters International and Amway. For a small fraction of all distributors who qualified, Amway launched what was called Q-12 trips for having achieved certain volume levels for twelve months out of the fiscal year. These trips were all-expenses paid. We just had to tell them which airport we wanted to fly out of. We also qualified for promotional trips at the Emerald level.

Here, we began to get a taste of the good life. The company paid for these annual, Amway-sponsored trips. (Directs' trips, sponsored by Zack, were mandatory leadership training trips we had to pay for out of our own pockets through a travel agent Zack knew. More on this later.) We went to Disney World in Florida several times. On one Amway trip, we were flown into Orlando. Amway provided our transportation. Employees of Amway greeted us as we got off the plane and we never touched our own luggage. It was tagged and later brought to our room in a luxury hotel.

When we checked in, we were handed a box overflowing with gifts, Disney dollars, and passes to any park we chose to visit. There was an itinerary for the week, but we had almost all day to ourselves with lavish dinners and entertainment at night. On one occasion, we were all put on large buses and brought over to Disney World for dinner.

The park had been closed to the public that night and rented *just for us*. We were overwhelmed as we were escorted through the back service entrance of Tomorrow Land to see the enormous feast and entertainment that greeted us. This was incredible! None of us had ever worked for an employer that would do this. The lavish hospitality helped anchor many positive emotions within us in relation to any thoughts we had about our upline or Amway. We were so grateful someone had given us a chance.

Another night, we were bussed to Universal Studios for an evening of magic. It was obvious this, too, had been rented exclusively for us. We heard a loud clamor as we walked into the park. We were herded down the main street and sidewalk. Police-like crowd control barriers directed us all onto the center area of the street, and we rounded the corner to see a huge, frenzied group of people on both sides of the street. Did you ever have a moment when you just stop, because your mind is racing through all four quadrants of your brain to process information, but you just cannot quite understand what is happening? We did not comprehend all the screaming and yelling as we moved forward. Some took flash pictures and ran out at us.

A strange sensation suddenly hit our heads and shoulders, as an enormous amount of confetti began to float down upon us out of the warm summer night. We were at a

* Jeff Yager, **Tuesday Evening**, Stock No. GDL 97-27, Copyright InterNET Services Corporation

parade. We **were** the parade!!! The huge number of people on the sidewalks taking flash pictures and running up for autographs were actors hired to make us feel like celebrities. We laughed and signed autographs until we almost cried. It was an exciting, emotional moment that anchored our total loyalty and commitment in this business. Our reactions were videotaped, and we were implored to press on and help many more people succeed to the level where they could have experiences like this with the ones they love. This was why the Diamonds were so respected. They were wealthy beyond their own needs, yet still worked to help nobodies, like us, enjoy life to this extent. We were truly blessed.

We were good, loyal distributors and continued to build our organization. In fact, it began to stretch out across many states and into other countries. We went on some trips that our sponsors, Kerry and Chris, did not qualify for. We did not want this to create hard feelings and were always careful to thank them for giving us the opportunity. We also praised them publicly whenever we spoke of these adventures.

On one occasion, we qualified for a near week-long, all-expenses-paid Caribbean cruise. Although it would have been the trip of a lifetime for us, after much thought we declined it out of loyalty. Otherwise, we would have had to miss a one-night Emerald leadership meeting Zack was having. We had to be loyal to the people who had given us this wonderful opportunity to live a full, meaningful life.

We continued to build our Amway business, but some changes began to take place that were difficult for us to understand. First, Zack and Molly counseled us on how to go Diamond and went over every day of my schedule for a month. In his boardroom for this counseling session, I had to account for every minute of a full month, using my schedule book. I went over every appointment, meeting, training session, open meeting, follow-up session, call session, and seminar we either spoke at or attended. Combined, we had put in nearly a hundred hours a week. But then Zack explained that seminars and travel time did not count as work. Seminars, which started at about 10 a.m. and continued until midnight, were not considered productive work time. Travel time did not count either, as commuters do not count their drive to work as productive effort. Yes, but I was averaging almost 2,000 miles a month, driving through multiple states to recruit prospects.

In any event, we were made to feel ashamed of our “lack of effort.” I was humiliated, as Zack verbally attacked me for not being more productive. Zack asked in a friendly way, “How many children do you have?” We responded three. He smiled and said he thought we would have had a lot more and then said, “Well, what do you **do** all day?” The implication was rude — that we must be at home doing nothing but having sex with all this free time. I felt angry he would even suggest something so inappropriate in Patty’s presence. He could see he had pushed us to the limit and then became friendly again. He asked us if we thought it was his objective to help or hurt us. How many correct answers are there to that question? We were becoming almost fearful of him, as were others.

He showed me how to go Diamond. He explained I needed to book my schedule from 10 a.m. straight through until midnight seven days a week, with an exception on Sunday morning for church. Patty did not speak, but bristled slightly, and he picked up on her body language. He could see she did not want me leaving the family on Sunday. We had usually spent Sunday afternoons relaxing at her parents’ house. He spent the next half-hour convincing her to accept this strategic plan.

She wanted the Diamond Lifestyle for our kids, didn’t she? Pastors work on

Sunday, right? We're serving God by helping His people. Did we think that God's people only needed help six days a week? Police officers work on Sundays. If she was home alone and someone was breaking into our house, wouldn't she be glad there was an officer on duty on Sunday? If one of our children became deathly ill, would she be glad there was a physician at the hospital, or would she feel it was better to wait until Monday? If we needed help, would we be glad he would be willing to come serve us on a Sunday?

Patty and I wanted not only to take care of our own finances, but also to have a surplus to bless the small Christian school our children attended. We wanted to be able to take care of our parents and take trips with them. We read the book *Just Wait Until We're Diamond* many times to our kids. It was a children's book that talked about the lifestyle they would enjoy as Diamond kids. They were excited about all we were working for. They, too, delayed many parts of their life because we were so busy working to get to Emerald and Diamond for them. They spent a great deal of time with babysitters. We had learned the principle of delayed gratification from *the system* and taught it to them.

"People come up to me all the time and say, 'Oh Birdie, I just love your wisdom. I wish I had wisdom like you. I wish I had your wisdom...' And I'm like ... It's not mine. They look at me kind of funny and they went... 'What do you mean?' It's not mine. It's God's. But He told me I could have it whenever I asked for it. So He gives it to me."*

— Amway Crown Ambassador Birdie Yager

It was hard to be gone so much. Adam once tackled me as I was leaving for a meeting. He was only about five years old, but he missed me very much. I had on my typical plan outfit — a freshly pressed dark suit, white shirt, and red tie. He knew I was leaving for a long time when he saw this. He had thrown a red tie around his neck and clutched my leg, begging me to take him with me. He was crying and it was all I could do to wrench him off and push him away as I left. There was no consoling him. I got in my car and cried as I left our driveway and drove off into the night. But, times like this made me more determined. Family was the reason to persist.

Seminars with recognition ceremonies and stories like these often ran late at night and involved bright, blasting strobe and laser lights that functioned in harmony with loud patriotic, religious, or motivational music. This was combined with incredible, emotional testimonials and even the chanting of phrases like "Go Diamond, Go Diamond, Go Diamond!" or "No Excuses! Five and Six Nights a Week" (a reference to showing the plan). The crowds were revved into a euphoric emotional and psychological state, and these feelings were then anchored with the phrases chanted, the music, and sometimes just the feeling of sheer exhaustion. As we would later be running the roads for our freedom, listening to a tape of that seminar, a certain song or a return to the exhausted state could trigger the euphoric feeling again.

Did you ever hear a sound or smell a fragrance that instantly transported you to a

* Birdie Yager, **Ladies Session Saturday Morning Part II**, Stock No. GDL 96-2

crystal clear memory, such as a sunny day in your childhood? All your senses were involved, especially if it was an exhilarating event or memory; your heart rate would actually increase. The seminars and the teaching and music tapes did that for us. As crazy as it sounds, the sensation of total exhaustion would trigger the feeling of euphoria. After the non-stop tapes, containing teachings we had absorbed, it felt great to be on the road at three in the morning with yet another tape playing and have an hour until you reached home. Not many people would be willing to do that. I had begun to think only in slogans or clichés. The best fruit was out on the limb. We were not going to be in the 95% of people who worked their whole lives only to be broke at retirement. We were living the principles of success and would be able to teach them to our children. We had to pay the price, so we learned to live in a near exhausted state.

There was more and more talk of Amway becoming a trillion-dollar company. We had expanded into over seventy foreign countries and territories. We were going into China. After a year in Japan, we were doing over a billion dollars a year. Success was everywhere. Going Diamond was going to be worth all the hard work. Some of the Diamonds had upgraded from \$500,000 coaches to private jets. Zack bought an incredible ranch in Colorado with 3,000 acres of land. It was loaded with bear, elk, deer, and turkey. He built an enormous log cabin/mansion on it, and his leaders all paid their own way there for multiple “leadership” visits. We then were required to chip in funds for gifts to properly thank Zack and Molly for taking time to teach us. There was no doubt Amway was working and in a huge way.

We were invited to do a fairly large seminar for John and Sue Walters. John is Zack’s brother, and he was an Amway Emerald at the time. It was an honor to go there and speak, as he and Sue had been two of our heroes and teachers as we had come up through the ranks. We spoke at a large high school auditorium and had a great day. The group was alive and motivated and excited to be there and take notes. For dinner, John and Sue took us to a small restaurant away from the crowd, so we could talk. They were both a lot of fun, and we enjoyed each other’s company very much. During the course of conversation, John mentioned that, as Emeralds, he and Sue got a break on the cost of each seminar ticket their group purchased for these monthly meetings.

This seemed odd, as we had never heard of anything like this and had been working with Zack directly since we started in The Business. The next week, at product pick up, I asked Kerry if he knew anything about this. He said “no” and quickly changed the subject. I let it drop, as I knew I didn’t need to think about anything that did not affect me directly. I just needed to stay focused. A few days later, Kerry called with good news. Zack was free later that week and had some time to counsel us to help us move on to Diamond. I was beginning to feel more nervous than excited, but I still looked forward to getting together with Zack.

We spent over an hour going over the normal business of our numbers of books, tapes, Amway kits, and seminar tickets moved in the last few months. He was very warm and engaging. The conversation slowly moved into a realm of somber, quiet communication. Zack confronted me very directly that I was never again, under any circumstances, to discuss the tool break on tapes and books with anyone else. This was a small perk to cover our expenses as leaders and was not an income source. The group might not understand this. We were also told never, ever to discuss anyone else’s tool break with them. He then mentioned the contents of the conversation I had had with his

own brother, who, he said, “should have known better.”

This began an hour-long talk about cross lining. Many, many examples were given of people who had destroyed their own businesses simply by discussing the details of it with someone other than their upline. He was interested in our success and had invested a lot of time, energy, and valuable teaching in Patty and me. He informed me that it would be disloyal to risk an investment he had made in our business for us by cross lining with anyone, including his own brother. This talk went on for an hour. He excused himself once to use the restroom and I was glad for the break.

I thought it was over, but he came back and launched immediately into a tirade from where he had left off. He explained that good, well-intentioned people had destroyed big organizations by getting a little sloppy on this one point, and we needed to teach it and be on guard for it among our own leaders. We were a little overwhelmed, but thankful for the direction. He really did seem to care and once again repeated how much he and Molly loved us and wanted us to go to Diamond Club in Hawaii with them. We were beginning to regard him with mixed emotions of warmth and total fear.

We were motivated and working hard. However, our finances began to spiral downward for a couple of reasons which were hard to identify or comprehend. We had been counseled to sell our rental properties as they were distractions. We had gotten totally debt free outside of our mortgage. But, we soon started to accumulate small and then larger amounts of credit card debt. There were more and more mandatory leadership seminars and trips to attend. If Zack called a meeting at his Ranch in Colorado, *you had to be there* on the date you were told. It was a privilege to learn from the master. If he called a Directs’ trip to Florida, you went and brought all your leaders with you. If he called a meeting on his private island in Canada, you were there, no questions asked. Leaders could not ever afford to miss a single upline event. They would look disloyal and not *plugged in*.

We received great news when Paul, the best man from our wedding, called and said he had met a beautiful, special lady. I could tell from every word he uttered she was *the one*. He was the first person we sponsored in The Business, and he had since moved to Louisiana. She happened to be in The Business in another leg of Dexter’s organization. What a small world! They knew how committed we were and needed to make plans.

Their families were going to travel from the upper East Coast clear to Baton Rouge for the wedding. They wanted to know if I would be the best man. They also needed to know what my seminar schedule was for the summer. They knew if it was on a seminar weekend I would not be able to attend their wedding. They actually booked the wedding date around our seminar schedule. They understood how committed I was to our organization and my family’s future.

The bomb dropped a few weeks before the wedding. Zack called a special Directs’ meeting on his private island in Canada. I considered calling and telling Paul I could not make it; in my heart, I knew he had time to find another best man. I think Patty convinced me I needed to go to the wedding. I nervously approached Zack backstage at a seminar. I knew I should not be asking this. Someone truly loyal and a real leader would not do this, but part of me knew I should be at this important event in my friend’s life.

I asked permission to attend the wedding and explained it had actually been planned around his seminar schedule. He looked at me as if in disbelief and then just told me to go. He seemed disgusted. I could tell this decision was going to cost me. He had

more than one family member plan their wedding around his schedule. He would rather serve his group, his family, and his God than be part of a crowd at someone's wedding.

I went to the wedding and it was spectacular. What an incredible couple Paul and Tammy made. They had a wonderful, loving church group and family with them. I felt so honored to be part of their special day. On another level, however, I was stricken with guilt for putting my personal pleasure before my loyalty to the group and my own family's future. They were all with Zack on his island. Patty went with them in my absence, but it was not the same. I was afraid, after nearly seven years of never missing anything, that my upline would think I was not plugged in. This was a terrible example to set for my leaders.

We were coached to book most major life events around The Business. Molly actually had a baby at a distant city, because she went into labor at a seminar where she and Zack were speaking. At another seminar, just before they were about to speak, they got a call and were told that Molly's mother's husband had just died. Zack counseled her and told her that she needed to speak on stage, because they had to keep their commitments. They both went on stage and spoke and then went home after the seminar.

That was commitment and servanthood to others. At another time, we had learned Zack's father was near death. He did not know that we knew of this. Here he was on his island, counseling a group of us, and asking if we had any problems he could help with. What a selfless example! His own father was passing away, yet he was so committed to us that he spent a couple days encouraging and directing us. We viewed him with an oddly evolving mixture of admiration, respect, and love, but also with the more frequent emotion of fear. He was becoming more hardcore in his demands for total loyalty.

Not only were we in this new bizarre world, it had become a part of us! We scheduled *everything* around business events. We ordered our Amway products on Sunday night, and they would come by truck on Wednesday. We would open up the cases and sort the many hundreds of pounds of Amway products, and then our downline would come and pick them up from us. Every Wednesday, like clockwork, our distributors would show up at prescribed times to pick up their tapes, books, and Amway products. Because this day was so vital to our tool and product flow, we scheduled Patty's Caesarian section for our daughter, Rachel, on a Thursday. Her birth date was actually chosen to avoid conflict with the distribution of Amway products.

One year, we called Rachel from Puerto Rico to sing happy birthday to her. We were there on an Emerald trip and had made arrangements for the family watching our kids to have a cake for her. We celebrated it a different time. We had been taught well. The Diamond ladies would always warn the women that their kids would try to make them feel guilty for being away so much. The women leaders needed to get it in their minds that being with their husbands, building their financial future, and serving others was the best example they could set for their children.

"In Financial planning you trust no one, in Amway, you trust everyone."*

— John Sestina, Amway Diamond & past Financial Planner of the Year

* Sestina, John. Profiles in Success, Copyright American Multimedia, Inc.

Our finances continued to worsen as leadership meetings became more frequent and expensive. The tape-of-the-week we all religiously purchased went from \$5.00 to \$6.00 a week plus tax and shipping. The tape-of-the-week program then went from one to *two* tapes-of-the-week. The extra tape was “only for the truly committed” who wanted to learn more material faster. All of our plugged-in distributors, which included almost everyone on the system, began this tape-of-the-week-plus-one program. That raised the *weekly* cost to a total of \$13.20 with tax and shipping. Later, a book-of-the-month and a video-of-the-month started. This was in addition to the regular monthly seminars and other training sessions.

Our finances continued to plummet, due to the increased costs of the system and our inability to sponsor large numbers, retain them, and grow our organization. Our upline was becoming almost maniacal in their zealous approach to leadership. We had “Artistry training sessions” for the ladies in our organization. These were scheduled for a weekend to give the ladies a background in our high-end line of cosmetics. The cosmetics and vitamins were astronomically expensive in comparison to anything we had ever purchased prior to The Business. However, this stuff was from *our* business and was going to pay for our kids’ college. We had to be 100% loyal to our product line if we expected our group to be loyal as well. Many distributors would quickly have well over \$1,000 invested in a cookware set, a water treatment system, and a heavy vacuum cleaner we marketed. All the loyal distributors had these items in their home. How could they promote a product to their group if they did not have one of their own?

I did not know the other advice the ladies were given until years later. The women in our organization were told what they needed to do to become Diamond ladies was support their husband and be a good Proverbs woman. Each woman was told never to refuse her husband sex for any reason. These women were even told to dress up and put on fresh make-up to greet their husbands when they would come home at one or two o’clock in the morning. At two different meetings, a member of our upline told the women they were to always look good, as they were their husband’s “best ornament.” This offended all those women who still had the capacity to think clearly — but what could they say?

“...almost all systems of authority in cult organizations indoctrinate their disciples to believe that anyone who opposes their beliefs cannot be motivated by anything other than satanic force or blind prejudices, or ignorance.”

*

- Dr. Walter Martin

* Dr. Walter Martin

Invasion from Above

“Few people are as well qualified as Rich DeVos to share with us the lessons for life, for he has demonstrated a mastery over many more of life’s problems than most.”*

— D. James Kennedy, Ph.D.

There seemed to be no level at which they would stop invading your personal life. A fellow Emerald told Patty she and her husband would ask couples they were counseling how many times a week they were having sex. A couple needed to really have a good relationship to sponsor effectively. Privately, Molly told Patty that if Zack came home at three in the morning and wanted sex, he was going to get it. After all, look how he provided for them. It sounded far too much like a “business deal” when Patty later revealed this to me.

The same time the women were getting this advice, Zack was holding a men’s leadership meeting, saying he did not know how a woman could want to have sex with a “wimp.” This was defined as someone not doing all he could to further his Amway business and financial future.

Our finances continued to erode as our Amway income was nowhere near what we had been promised. This, coupled with an ever-increasing number of required “tools” and leadership meetings, drew us further and further into debt. By the time we were tens of thousands of dollars in debt, Zack counseled us to get a second mortgage to pay off the credit cards. We did that, but were soon accumulating more debt. We had been blessed with a beautiful baby girl, but it was impossible to live on \$25,000 (before taxes) with all the business expenses and volume of Amway products we were required to purchase to remain clearly loyal. We had to move forward. There was no plan B. There was no other way. We pushed and pushed and did an inhuman amount of work and finally hit our next huge goal of Emerald! Surely, this would solve our financial problems.

A very small fraction of less than 1% of all distributors in North America in any given year ever achieve Emerald. This was almost like winning the Olympics. Amway called and interviewed us for a story. This, along with our picture, was for publication in their national magazine called the *Amagram*. They also gave us a free web page with our pictures and biographical information on it. We qualified for more trips and new bonuses. This was an exciting time. It had been an incredibly hard journey.

Finally, we would have the six-figure income and, therefore, the freedom we had slaved for. All this hard work would have to pay off. It was all going to have been worth it now, and we would have time for the family and each other. At the seminar, we were brought on stage to the applause of 7,000 screaming, clapping distributors. God was once

* DeVos, Rich. *Hope From My Heart* (Endorsement by D. James Kennedy, Ph.D., Senior Minister Coral Ridge)

again using us to inspire others. We delivered a powerful speech that was later made into a tape-of-the-week and sold internationally. We did not get paid anything for this tape, as it was an honor to speak on a Walters/Yager stage. Our credibility in the organization grew. People treated us more and more as if we possessed a large amount of wisdom.

We were invited to speak at other leadership functions. We would get paid \$900, as Amway Emeralds, to do an all-day seminar. We would do this only two or three times a year. It was wonderful to be able to inspire people and teach them principles of success. Public speaking had been my greatest fear, but I had studied the best speakers and became good at entertaining an audience and drawing them in emotionally while I taught them. I could paint a vivid picture of what their future looked like without The Business. I could also paint a compelling vision of the limitless possibilities their futures held if they only persisted. They needed to have staying power and keep focused on the prize. The word “quit” had to be erased from their vocabularies. It did not exist, and it was not an option.

We anxiously waited for our first big month of Emerald income. We could finally back off a little and have some time together as a family. The day our bonus check from Amway arrived, we opened it with great anticipation — only to find there was almost no reward. *Our check had remained virtually the same.* Our income went up to near a paltry \$30,000 a year. We were shocked. I had left my corporate career for the \$100,000 income at this level. This was so confusing. What could we possibly be doing wrong, when everyone else was making so much money? We had to get with Zack and Molly and sort this out. Our financial situation was getting worse and worse. Going Emerald was supposed to have solved all of our economic worries.

Kerry and Chris summoned us for a counseling session. This was another secret meeting, where we were told that whatever was shared at that meeting could not be discussed with anyone else. They talked about what we had already accidentally discovered. There was a small price break given to Emeralds for each seminar ticket sold in their organization. It was once again stressed that this was a small perk to cover our travel expenses and to help us stock more tools to have on hand for our group. It was not income to be used for lifestyle. Big deal, I thought. It didn’t cover much of anything. I couldn’t share this, however, with Kerry and Chris.

Since we had gone Emerald and they had not, their attitude became more hostile towards us. We had started out as friends and partners in Amway. Now, their talks became more and more hardcore at training sessions I was forced to have my group attend. Not only were we targets, but our leaders soon were singled out as disloyal. Kerry and Chris were no longer relating well. They seemed to have become “Amway zombies.”

They cut off nearly all information sources and bragged that their TV was only hooked up to a VCR. They boasted that the only TV they watched were Amway motivational or instructional business videos. We would speak first at a large training session and try to bring normalcy. We would describe The Business as just a vehicle to bring about the lifestyle we wanted. We were also as active as we could manage to be at the small Christian school our children attended, and I had been elected president of the parent-teacher fellowship. A balance was important in life, even though we didn’t display this too much ourselves; yet Kerry and Chris would then get up and close the meeting by stating that this business was their **whole life** and drone on and on about *total loyalty*. They just had a handful of distributors in their business outside of what we had built. Most of the rest had all quit.

It was odd that we were bringing almost 95% of the distributors to a meeting, yet had no control over the topics to be covered. They were upline and used the meetings as a forum to discuss abortion or whatever topic they wanted. It was getting out of hand. They had lost almost their entire organization from this overzealous, nearly rabid conviction to our upline and Amway. We called Zack and Molly and asked to counsel with them. We got on their schedule and went down to visit them at their new office building.

We arrived a few minutes early and brought a small food tray as a gift to show respect. They greeted us warmly and we went up into the boardroom. Zack had a way of taking over the entire conversation and you sometimes would only get to listen to him and never get to the questions you had. We *had* to discuss our over \$70,000 shortfall of income at the Emerald level, as well as Kerry and Chris's increasingly destructive behavior. I began to discuss our finances. Other Pearls and Emeralds openly spoke of their six-figure incomes. What could we possibly be doing wrong? Zack immediately launched into a talk that we would soon find all too familiar.

First, he made it clear he was not a bank and did not make loans to anyone in his group as a policy, and we should have the same policy. This went on and on and he made us feel stupid. He made it look as if, in a humiliating way, we had come to ask him for money, when we had the greatest financial vehicle in the world in our own hands. We did not want a cent of his! We simply wanted to make the income we had worked nearly 100 hours a week for eight years for, without it being destroyed by an out-of-control upline.

The next speech was about jealousy and envy. If we were worried about his money or what other Emeralds or Pearls were making, Satan had put envy in our hearts to confuse us. Only a socialist or a loser would concern himself with the income of another. No wonder we weren't making a lot if our focus was on what other people were making. God would not reward envy. He rewards work and a pure heart. The person responsible for my income could be found in the mirror in our house *blah, blah, blah, blah.... What a bunch of crap.* We just wanted to know how to make our business profitable. What was going on? This verbal rampage made it very clear that income was not something we could talk about with him. This was our hero, my father figure. I not only wanted to succeed, but also wanted to make him proud. He made us feel like morons for asking any questions.

He then lambasted me for not being prepared to counsel by not having my group drawn out on paper. Having your group drawn out is a schematic of your organization with each distributor represented by a circle and connected by lines to their respective upline and downline. The group had gotten far too big to do that, and he had told me that it was not necessary about a year ago. There was no way he could counsel me to move a "blob" forward. He needed to see the way the group was structured to give us accurate advice. We had wasted his time as well as our own. In a later counseling session, I brought our group carefully drawn out on several large pieces of posterboard. This time, Zack lambasted me for wasting my time with such a project.

On this occasion, he left the room to use the bathroom. Molly could see from our shell-shocked look that something was wrong. She asked if Zack had told us to come with our group drawn out. We replied that we been following his directions. She just said not to bring it next time and got quiet when he got back. She seemed fearful herself, and we realized that *no one* questioned Zack — not even his own wife. This was hard for us to even understand for reasons that would not be clear to us for years to come.

They told us, as they had many times before, that we could double our income in the next three months. It was harder when *they* started. Near the end they would always let off on the verbal assault and then shift to becoming supportive, warm, and compassionate. They told us they believed in us, loved us, and saw us as Diamonds. We just needed to rise above our challenges. They told us that next year the Emerald bonus would come in from Amway and that would help out with our growing debts.

We left in shock. We loved, respected, and also now completely feared Zack. It was a strange mixture of conflicting emotions. He was not at all the man we saw on the stage. He was beginning to reveal a side of himself the public never knew. We felt very sorry that Kerry and Chris were sabotaging their own business. We had thought Zack would address the situation. For some reason, he was determined to turn a deaf ear to these shortcomings. Part of the reason for this could be that Kerry was totally, unquestioningly loyal. He would do almost nothing without Zack's counsel. Patty and I joked that he must call Zack to find out how many squares of toilet tissue to use. It was getting pretty crazy.

"We could never go to war, you'd have to check upline first."

*

— Amway Crown Jody Victor

Kerry began to carry a gun in a fanny pack to almost all functions. He spoke of taking a street-gunfight survival course. We were now entering a whole new realm of strange. I came backstage after giving a motivational talk to the group and found him openly brandishing a loaded revolver with a large group of my closest friends thirty feet away on the other side of a portable wall. This violated all safety standards for handling a firearm. I have a gun. I am not afraid of firearms, as my father was an NRA instructor. Because we couldn't call Zack on this issue, we called Kerry's sponsor, who was a Direct Distributor and also happens to be his brother-in-law. I informed him Kerry had openly displayed a loaded revolver at an Amway training meeting and was carrying it at other seminars. He responded, "A lot of guys up there carry guns." I was dumbfounded. There were no rules that applied if you are upline, *period*.

"Even though I understand, some people have to be killed. It would be a lot easier for me to pull the trigger if I thought someone was killing you than to pull the trigger if I knew they were trying to kill me."**

— Dexter Yager

* Jody Victor, *It's Unbelievable* audiotope, Stock No. DBR 897

** Dexter and Birdie Yager, *Tuesday Evening Part II* audiotope, Stock No. GDL 95-29, copyright Internet Services Corporation

Kerry had been running security at the large seminars for Zack. He recruited some of my Direct Distributors to act as his informal police force. Some carried guns in ankle holsters or fanny packs. We found out they were in charge of counting large quantities of cash from the door sales of leadership tickets. They did this in a secret location, loading the cash into a briefcase or suitcase, and then getting it onto Zack's coach. A volunteer staff of Direct Distributors, who were thankful to serve the group, ran these large seminars, which had thousands in attendance. Some of my leaders would pay over \$400 as a couple to get to a seminar and then they would work the entire weekend, missing almost every speaker.

Zack entrusted me with the job of running the backstage of these seminars. I would coordinate with the hosts assigned to each speaker. We would ensure that a limousine was at the airport to pick them up on time. The hosts were also responsible to get the speaker backstage a half-hour before they were to speak. This gave me direct contact with many of the Diamonds as well as the highest level of religious and political leaders in the country. It was an exciting duty, but it was also grueling. I'd be on my feet from about 8 a.m. until 2 a.m. each day. We, too, had paid over \$400 to attend, but Patty would sit alone at a table up front reserved for Emeralds and Diamonds. Now, we did get a break on ticket sales for these seminars. For some of these huge events, Patty and I would have brought 10% of the entire crowd. For that, we received about a \$400 break for our group's ticket sales. So it was a wash for us financially rather than an income source.

Now, after a couple thousand hours of tapes, there was no limit to what I would do for my business or my organization. I developed kidney stones one day and barely made it to the hospital emergency room. The medical staff administered morphine several times, but this gave me no relief. I had never experienced pain like that before. I thought they were giving me a placebo, because the pain did not subside. They finally hit me with a harder narcotic that gave me a merciful numbness.

What a relief! I had to get out of there! I had committed to do an open opportunity meeting in Zack's group to be held at a large hotel several hours away in Philadelphia. I left the hospital in a very weak, but pain-free state. I found a couple distributors who could drive me down. After a quick shave and shower, I slid into a fresh suit and eased myself gingerly into the car. I was in relatively good shape by the time we arrived.

The host was in the lobby waiting to greet us. I did not initially mention the day's events as that would be "passing negative." The host went to the podium and began my introduction. As was my habit, I said a silent prayer and prepared to reach anyone in the room who wanted to make their life better. By the time I walked to the podium, I was fully energized. The meeting went well and I spoke with great enthusiasm for about an hour and a half. I was really starting to hurt by the end, but was able to mask the pain. After the meeting, we greeted guests and answered questions. Once all the prospects left, we got together with the distributors for a late night teaching meeting called a "nuts and bolts" session. The pain was intensifying rapidly.

Fortunately, I was able to make it though and fulfill my responsibilities. How could I teach my leaders commitment if I did not live it? Thank God, the host for the evening was a dentist. He drove us to an all-night pharmacy and got me some pills to knock me out for the return trip. We headed back up the long, dark highway with a tape playing and I drifted off to sleep.

One for the Money, Two for the Show

A travel seminar was arranged for all Direct Distributors and above — a cruise to Alaska. It was promoted for quite a long time, as “every leader will be there.” I was concerned about the expense, since some of these trips (none of which we had ever missed) had cost as much as \$2,000 in airfare, hotels, and meeting fees. We were barely able to borrow enough to keep going at this point. But, we figured we had to be close to our big paycheck soon. Once everyone was excited about the trip “every leader would be on,” the cost was announced: \$5,000! I was shocked. None of us could afford that!

We **had to** book the trip with a special form through a specific travel agency chosen by Zack. No exceptions to this were allowed. A woman in our organization who was an inactive Silver (Direct) and owner of a travel agency would later tell us this was nearly **double** the cost of what she could have booked for the group. Every “leader” had to put down a \$1,000 deposit on faith, and the rest was collected in increments. Not only were the Directs pressured to prove their “leadership” by doing this, non-Directs were pressured as well. At one seminar of thousands, all distributors were advised to put down their \$1,000 on faith that they would go Direct in time to qualify for the trip.

If they had not become Directs by then, they could not go, because this was a trip only for Directs. There would be absolutely no refunds. We had distributors at only 1,000 PV “prove their faith” by putting down their non-refundable \$1,000 deposit. Many were advised to walk by faith, not sight. Faith was defined as believing what could be, not what was actually in front of them at that moment. It was a fiasco. We had many distributors in our organization lose their whole deposit. We later learned that Zack and Molly, however, enjoyed the trip, staying in a sprawling presidential suite with a private outside deck. On one excursion to shore, Molly bought a five-carat ring.

Patty and I worked and struggled, and there was no possible way for us to come up with the additional \$4,000. We, of course, as leaders, had scraped together and mailed in our \$1,000 non-refundable deposit. We were tapped out and had nowhere else we could possibly borrow the money. We were now in a terrible predicament. But, as leaders, we had to promote this trip and were pushed to “get our numbers up.” This was another opportunity for our leaders to spend personal time with Zack and Molly. We were told that alone was worth more than \$5,000 if they applied what they learned.

We called Zack and told him we could not make it. He was disappointed I was not being more of a possibility thinker. He asked if we could borrow the money we needed in order to go on this trip. He knew from counseling us that we were completely tapped out, but I ashamedly, once again, repeated the current status of our exhausted finances and burgeoning debt. He thought for a minute and advised me that I should sell Amway vacuum cleaners to raise the money. He was pathetically out of touch with the reality of how his distributors lived. This trip was not a good idea and I resented that we, along with our leaders, were being pressured to waste our meager resources on something so opulent. Not a single one of us would have chosen to do this on our own.

How many vacuum cleaners would I have to sell to make the additional \$4,000?

We had *never* been able to sell a single vacuum cleaner outside of the organization. They cost about \$300 more than one from Wal-Mart and are incredibly heavy. He chided us and reminded us we had a few months left, and he knew I was a resourceful leader and would come up with the money somehow.

We were not able to do this and were at the point where we could not justify it with our devastated financial picture. At the last minute, we sent, in shame, a voice mail to our leaders saying we were running for a big goal and Zack suggested we stay home and hit it. It was a lie, and I felt terrible. They were very disappointed, as quite a few were going on this trip and hoped we could spend a lot of time with them. They were our leaders and closest friends. We agonized over our situation. In almost a decade, we had never missed a single leadership meeting, except when I was in Paul's wedding. We pressed on harder toward our Diamond goal to make up for it.

On the Defensive

As we built toward Diamond, the group as a whole began to get a great deal of flack from two web sites off the Internet. One site was hosted by a man named Sidney Schwartz. His web site was called *Amway: The Untold Story*. A man named Ashley Wilkes created and hosted a site called *AMO's: The Nightmare Builders?* Ashley was the one who coined the term Amway Motivational Organization (AMO). We would be out showing the plan and prospects would have twenty pages of negative garbage printed off these sites. I often thought these two guys were real losers. Who else would take so much time out of their lives to put down a good and honorable business? Despite how bizarre Dexter seemed, the business itself was principled and was predicated upon servanthood. I thought at times about meeting the two men and beating them unmercifully. They were the enemy. I hoped something terrible would happen to them both. They were evil. They were a threat to my family's future. (The indoctrination had worked all too well.)

The Amway business and its related system had by now completely taken ownership of nearly every aspect of our lives. Due to the gradual indoctrination over years, we were completely unaware of what was happening. We had surrendered our life, all our money, our careers, and our family time to what we believed was "our" business. We had lost touch with most of our extended family members and any friends outside of The Business. We no longer seemed to have much in common with them. We maintained a few relationships, but spent very little time with non-Amway people.

Seldom could we schedule any social event as The Business now took nearly every weekend. In the rare event we could get together with a friend or family member on the outside, we had very little we could talk about. We no longer watched the news, listened to the radio, or read newspapers. We knew almost nothing of current events. They did not want to be recruited into Amway, and The Business was all we now knew how to talk about with any confidence.

Deep inside, we felt something was wrong, but did not know what. In our minds, The Business was only a financial vehicle to give our family a secure future and time together. The destruction of our family unit and marriage was so gradual, we hadn't noticed it happening. On one level, we were very unhappy; but on the other hand, we felt

we were close to what we had worked so hard to achieve. There was no turning back. That was not an option we could even conceive. By now, we had been thoroughly convinced that this was the only way we could succeed and serve our God and family to our highest potential.

I was gone constantly. My used Cadillac now had over 200,000 miles on it. When I was home, I was useless. I felt like such a failure. Distributors were so strongly conditioned that many of us felt guilty when we were home because we were not out being productive for the ones we loved. It was awful. I would be at home for a few minutes with the people I loved most in life and I would feel guilty for being there. We were quickly going broke, despite our supposed incredible success advertised by our upline. We felt enormous guilt for being at this level and making less than what we believed everyone else was making. We were successful failures. I had to push on to Diamond. It was the only option.

Patty and I handled these stresses differently. A year after we made our exodus from Amway, she explained that she had to withdraw emotionally from me just to survive. She lived in fear every night that I would die on the road. Distributors *had* died on the road, and we knew some who had had terrible car accidents. I was running in a near-constant state of exhaustion, and the rumble strips on the side of the highway woke me up more than once as my car ran off the road.

Dream or Nightmare?

"I guess there's nothing more exciting to know you're right where God wants you to be and doing exactly what He wants you to do and being precisely in His will."*

— Triple Diamond Cherry Meadows

We both became emotionally muted. We felt no highs or lows. We were very numb. Our own internal defense systems seemed to be trying to block out all the pain of being apart. The stress of our crumbling finances and the contradictions we were seeing in our trusted upline leadership were taking a toll on both of us.

Finally, Patty had had enough, and, unbeknownst to me, she stopped listening to tapes at home. This initiated a radical change, as she soon started seeing with more discernment than I could muster. She never had liked Zack. To her, he seemed more like an egotistical bully than a Christian mentor. I still firmly believed he was a good, honorable man, who just could not see the entire hostile situation with our sponsors. I was sure that, once he saw the whole picture, he would do something about it, and everything would change.

Because of my training as an auditor, I am very good with numbers. Before The

* Cherry Meadows, *Ladies Meeting Tuesday Afternoon Part II* audiotape, Stock No. GDL 96-26, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

Business, I was a good money manager and had invested well in real estate. Patty and I had gotten to the point where, in our twenties, we had paid off all our college loans, consumer debt, credit cards, and even our cars. We had become debt free except for a first mortgage on our home.

What a different picture we presented now! I had been convinced by my upline that by going Diamond, I would make \$250,000 a year. That actually seemed like my only out, as we had by now acquired nearly \$100,000 in new debt while counseling with Zack. We weren't making the reported \$100,000 Emerald income — far from it. Routinely, we received conflicting advice. We would be told a real man gets out of debt and solves the money problem. We would then be told that a true leader does not ever miss any leadership event for any reason. Not to be considered “plugged in” was the kiss of death in the business. If you fell from favor, you would be taken off the speaking list for open meetings and seminars and would then lose credibility in your own organization, which had been well trained to follow their plugged-in upline.

Despite everything that seemed to be going wrong, I was able to meet and sponsor several strangers to begin the run for Diamond. We had to have six legs qualifying at over 7500 PV for six months and I told myself that, at that point, all those problems would be behind us. Zack and Molly would know we were good leaders, and our finances would improve drastically. These new recruits soon became good friends, as I drove with them as far away as Maine to help develop their organizations. I worked like I never thought was physically possible. I blocked out the negative thoughts, as I had been trained, and listened to ten or more tapes on long trips.

Patty had cooled off on The Business. Thank God! In the midst of this insanity, she could see clearly that our children needed at least one good parent, and she poured her energies into them. For that, I will be forever grateful to her. She was somehow able to provide a sense of normalcy for them. She still went with me on the speaking trips and to meetings, and we both hated how much we were required to be away from home as Emeralds. We each just coped with this in our own ways.

Meanwhile, I had so much going on in my mind that I began to space out on Patty and the kids. They would be talking to me at dinner and would have to ask me the same question four or five times before I heard it. I was almost a literal zombie. The only times I could appear normal were when I was actively involved in doing the tasks of sponsoring and teaching distributors. I could go on autopilot and fake joy and enthusiasm as I motivated groups of people.

It's hard to pinpoint the exact moment when even I had to acknowledge the dream had become a nightmare. But, out of nowhere, an intensely miserable season began in which I lost faith in one “story” after another. It was almost like being blind, then having an operation that restored only a little bit of my sight. The frightening part was that I was either seeing things I did not want to see or things I could not understand. It was as though there was darkness around me and also a darkness *within* me that I could not comprehend.

I wrote off these strange sensations as stress from the massive financial pressures we were experiencing. We were struggling to pay our property taxes on our home and owed the IRS back taxes. We *had* to move forward to Diamond. I had to believe it was the only way out. Zack heard what I said about our finances, but continued to advise me to press on and even told me to go Diamond, because I surely did not want to get a “job.”

A job represented slavery and, furthermore, would destroy the group we had worked so hard to build.

At some point later, things seemed to pick up, and we were hand picked by Zack to fly to Argentina to speak to his organization. Patty and I did not have business there, but our organization had grown into Colombia and was soon to spread into Europe and the Philippines. We flew to Argentina from Miami and were met by a translator and a driver. We were treated very well and were driven far inland to a city called Rosario. We fell in love with the people there. They were so kind and gracious. Some of them had tears welling up in their eyes as we encouraged them. It was a powerful event for us and for them. They were so hungry for knowledge that I ended up dropping Patty off at our room at about 2 a.m. Then, I stayed up answering questions for some of the leaders until about 5 a.m. Finally, I had to get back to the hotel and catch a few hours sleep because we had a training session to do that morning. We developed a deep bond with these beautiful people and again felt like God was using us for good.

We flew home and our organization was once again energized. The business was working after having seen a couple they knew, like us, start from nothing, go Emerald, and begin to travel the world. It was a thrill for us to do this and felt even better that we appeared to be in good favor with Zack. We were paid \$900 for nearly a week's work for the two of us in the form of a speaking fee. This wasn't much; it might not even work out to minimum wage after we paid taxes on it, but we were honored to be part of the leadership team.

The group we had in the U.S. was enthralled at Amway's global expansion. Japan had embraced Amway and, within twelve years, was doing over a billion dollars a year there. China was opened, giving one of the largest populations on earth access to this "great opportunity." Chinatowns in nearly every U.S. city were overrun with distributors looking to sponsor people with relatives or friends in China just to get a piece of the action. We were advised that Amway was now growing at *a billion dollars a year* in sales. Amway was quickly becoming a dominant, global enterprise with the apparent support and praise of many of America's most influential religious and political leaders. Dexter Yager may not have been exaggerating when he told us in an Emerald- and Diamond-only meeting that Amway was going to be a "trillion dollar company."¹

"And I don't care whether it's your family or who...that would tell your kids you're foolish doing this business, those people you don't need in your life. You've got to make those decisions."*

— Amway Crown Ambassador Dexter Yager

With this success for inspiration, I finally got the courage to show my father and

¹ DEX: TUES. EVENING, PART II audiotope, GDL 96-40 Part II, Copyright 1996 Internet Services Corporation

* Dexter Yager, *What is This All About?* audiotope, Stock No. YNMI-1, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

his wife The Business. One of the key motivators that drove Patty and me to succeed was we wanted to be in a position to help our parents. This was a dream come true in many ways. We could build a father-son business and spend a lot of time together doing it. As he and his wife lived six hours away, we normally only saw them once a year. If they were in The Business, we could justify many more road trips to see them. I loved my dad and his wife. Having grown up living with my mother, I was finally getting to know my real dad and I relished our time together.

More than anything, I also wanted him to be proud of me. Even though I was an adult, I wanted him to be proud he was my father. I dreamed of dad and his wife, Kelly, coming to a seminar where Patty and I would be the featured speakers before an audience of thousands. I often visualized the day we would go Diamond, picturing him there for the celebration. I began making trips to their home and sponsored some people for him. However, it did not work out. I could not get them sold on buying our products and listening to the many tapes that, I believed, were vital to their success. I was frustrated that I could not get them to understand the value of being mentored by millionaires. Also, Kelly felt the Amway products were far more expensive than those she normally purchased. I was very disappointed, as I thought we could have been a dream team in The Business. This offered me more encouragement to go Diamond to show them it was worth it. By now, I was trained to the point where the greater the adversity, the more committed I was to the cause.

The Global Amway Empire was exploding and we were part of it. Ten years from now, everyone was going to wish they had been us and they had done what we had done. Despite the good news on the global front, things were happening that made us uneasy. Zack and Kerry both became almost militant in the demands they placed upon their loyal distributors. There was no room for anything but total, 100%, unquestioning loyalty. There were three key leaders in Zack's organization who were nearly fanatical in their talks on loyalty. Some even mentioned they were willing to die for Zack, as he had sacrificed selflessly to help them have a full life and future. These three also seemed to be making the most income.

Part of me felt as if I needed to be more humble and more fully submit to this leadership and part of me thought they were raving lunatics. I would not be like that nor would I ever expect that type of relationship from people in my group. We would go Diamond and treat our distributors as partners, not servants. It was supposed to be *our* business, wasn't it? I resented the fact that Zack was portrayed as a humble servant, but, in private, he treated his leaders worse than domestic help. Many of us detailed his luxury cars, polished his huge coach, and did other work around his properties. Some of my Direct Distributors, whose finances were now terrible, were excited to serve; their honorable intentions often turned them into unpaid servants.

Zack was almost a dictator behind the scenes, but, at times, he was still warm and compassionate. He was brilliant, charismatic, and could make you feel great about yourself and your business. He could also, with a single comment, knock your legs out from under you in front of your group or in front of other leaders. Two Diamond women we knew confided in us that they dreaded counseling with him because they were scared of him. His own family seemed fearful of him at times. Molly told Patty how much fun she and the kids had when he went away on trips. They had a wonderful time for a few days and then would scamper about to complete the list of tasks that he had left for them.

We spent time with Dexter once or twice a year. We would always see him at the annual “Go Diamond” seminars for Direct Distributors and above. One year, we went to New Orleans where the seminar was held in the Superdome. It was an enormous meeting that once again reaffirmed The Business was working in a big way. It was powerful to see what appeared to be tens of thousands of distributors all at the Direct level and above. We would usually arrive on a Friday. The Directs would leave on Sunday and the rest of us higher-level leaders would have meetings through Tuesday night. It was expensive, motivating, and grueling all at the same time.

Dexter has been known to speak literally until sunrise on occasion. Not surprisingly, we were usually exhausted by Sunday. The Emerald meetings then began on Monday. I had never been more tired in my life, not in Marine Corps training, not anywhere. Zack had always professed his total allegiance to Dexter, but did not talk about him much at all, outside of talks on loyalty. Many of the Diamonds also spoke with deep admiration and sincerity about Dexter. In our organization, in an unspoken way, Zack was clearly the leader — but it was implied that we were fortunate also to have access to the system Dexter had created. We normally had a seminar called the Yager Spectacular, but, for a couple years, we had other speakers on stage to share. We were told Dexter was busy, but I did not buy it. The seminar eventually was called something like Walters Spectacular and Dexter was invited in. Zack advised us, prior to leaving for one Go Diamond Seminar, not to sign anything that Dexter or his people gave us until his attorney had a chance to review it for us. He would not tell us any more than that. We would later find out this was the BSMAA (Business Support Materials Arbitration Agreement) that Patty and I would eventually be *forced* to sign.

“Cults often use practices such as mind control to create loyalty in their followers.”*

* Smith, P.W., Hayes, C.P., McRoberts, K.D., *In Search of Truth*, Springfield, MO: Radiant Life

Strife Within and Without

*"We can't all be lying to you. You know... I mean this thing works."**

— Executive Diamond M. J. Michael

We had a new challenge. We had helped a couple named Rick and Paula** go Emerald. We had been building our business on our own since the 4000 PV level, so Kerry and Chris hardly knew them or the leaders we had helped develop in their organization. Rick and Paula were level headed and had treated their distributors with respect. They, too, were outraged at the somewhat mindless, arrogant talks we were forced to have our groups sit through. They, too, were disgusted at how our people were being financially bled dry to pay for a seemingly unending list of required books, tapes, and videos. Our leaders were also asked to pay \$400 or more in expenses for individual big seminars, and then couldn't hear the messages because they were working for free. They did not feel they could say no, as they would appear disloyal or unwilling to serve the group.

Rick and Paula also had been branded as disloyal and had felt the wrath of Kerry. They had made the critical error of questioning upline decisions when these seemed to be detrimental to their group. We were powerless to protect our own people. The situation was not workable. It seemed as if Kerry could destroy our group faster than we could build it. To this point, Patty and I had not shared any "negative" with Rick and Paula, as this was a violation of the Cardinal Rules. We had put on a strong game face and had not made them aware of our ongoing struggles with Kerry and Zack. Paula called one day and told us Rick was so frustrated he had been in their basement beating the wall with a baseball bat. We needed to talk or they were on the way out of The Business.

They came over and shared their concerns. The feelings and observations they had were the same as ours. We could no longer cover up or we were going to lose them and their entire group. They were very good friends. We came clean and it was an incredible relief to be able to talk to someone about our struggles. They were ready to quit and everything hinged on the answer I gave to one question: they asked me if the apparent demeaning, arrogant way Kerry behaved was just him or was this what Zack did as well? I shared the frustrations we had, but assured them Zack was a good, honorable man. I explained Zack was fair and just, but, for some reason, he did not seem to understand the situation with Kerry's alienating behavior. He may have heard so many bad things from

* M. J. Michael, *Ladies Session Saturday Morning – Part 1*, Stock No. GDL 96-1, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

** Not their real names

Kerry and Chris about Patty and me that he never got an objective view. I could not reason nor comprehend the fact that Zack knew, understood, and approved what was going on.

We decided the best course of action would be for them to bring all this up when they counseled with Zack and Molly next. Perhaps if he heard the same things from an objective second party, Zack would understand the challenges that were tearing our group up. They were scared! We were all respectful and yet fearful of Zack. We agreed never to acknowledge we had spoken of this or all four of us would be in trouble for passing negative and de-edifying. The situation was becoming increasingly critical as Kerry was unpredictable and more and more militant in his demands on the leaders in the organization. I admired Rick's courage and was honestly thankful we were about to have this resolved so we would be free to build our businesses and help those we had promised to assist.

Rick called Zack and told him he would like to get on his schedule to counsel soon, as he had some concerns. Zack always promoted himself as the problem solver and asked Rick to prepare a specific list of concerns. We were all enthusiastic about the outcome of this meeting, but upon their return, Rick and Paula did not call us. They didn't even call the next day. This was very odd. We called them and Paula was still in a state of shock. As she described it, the meeting had started friendly, but turned into an all-out verbal assault as soon as the Kerry issue was raised. Rick was lambasted for every issue he brought up to discuss!

They experienced, perhaps, an even greater verbal thrashing than we had ourselves. They were accused of having out-of-control egos, a lack of respect, being poor examples, and finding fault with others and with God's will. They were not able to utter a single word to each other during the hour and a half ride home. They were in a total state of shock and did not know who or what to believe. I think Zack may have hammered them about us, as we rarely spoke for the next two months. Zack had told them they needed to go out of their way to establish a good relationship with Kerry and Chris. They were forced to call them to go out to dinner or to counsel. We did not know exactly what issues they were discussing, as they were now fearful of confiding too much in us. Perhaps Zack had told them we were a bad influence. We all lived in a state of paranoia, not knowing who to trust.

Patty and I now had massive debts. We had cars that looked great on the surface, but were barely running. We owed back property and income taxes and all our credit cards were maxed out. The money we borrowed from our last resources went to pay for the last couple of Go Diamond seminars to get the answers we needed in order for us to go Diamond. We had to do this because we were desperate. There was no other way. We went in order to get more business logistics to move our business forward. A lot of what we heard, we did not understand at the time. Remember the Cardinal Rule against passing negative? Apparently, there had been a very secretive war going on for quite a while between Amway and Dexter and the other high-level distributors involved in the tool business (this being the sales of tapes, books, videos, and seminar tools).

High-level Diamond Distributors informed us that things were better now between the Company (Amway) and the field (us) than they ever had been. We did not even know they had been bad. Senior Amway management people and even some of the DeVos family members came in to speak at some of these functions. They praised Dexter for his

leadership and showered him with seemingly enormous bonuses as tokens of their appreciation. Dexter, in turn, praised them with heartfelt emotions. Once the Amway people were not present, we were told the rest of the story and advised not to repeat it to anyone in our group because it was negative.

Triple Diamonds Jerry and Sherry Meadows spoke of qualifying for a high-level luxury trip for what they had done in their business. They were then uninvited by a powerful member of the Amway management staff. They were extremely hurt. Others talked of being investigated by Amway for trumped up infractions of the Rules of Conduct and nearly having their business destroyed. Some Diamonds actually said they had been told Dexter was a crook and was going to jail. Others were placed under great pressure and were told they would be let off the hook if they would just admit who trained them (Dexter). From the little information we received, it appeared this was about the tool business. Amway did not know how vital the tool business was to holding the distributor force together. In any event, that was all in the past and we now had a secure future for our children, as these heroes of the faith had paid a great price for us.

It sounded as if Amway wanted to shut down some of their biggest distributors. Why would they do this? Were they afraid these people were becoming too powerful? It did not make sense, but we were glad it was history now. We had enough challenges. The ADA Board was something that had been promoted as one of the biggest benefits to us as distributors. The Amway Distributors Association (ADA) Board was a board comprised of family members (who owned or managed Amway) and elected Distributor leaders. From the Diamonds we knew, it looked as if Dexter and Diamonds in his organization controlled most of the distributor side of the ADA Board. In any event, this board voted on policy change and it gave us a voice in any issues that could affect our future.

Another wealthy Crown Distributor, Jody Victor, was working closely with Amway senior management on a legal document that would help us all with *risk reduction*. This was the mysterious BSMAA that Zack had initially warned us not to sign. “Risk reduction” was a term that was foreign to us, but he and senior Amway staffers began using it with frequency. He spoke of it as a document that would secure our businesses as never before. He mentioned a distributor class-action suit that had originated years ago out of Philadelphia by a couple named Hanrahan. To the crowd’s glee, he announced that, when finalized, this new document would preclude there ever being a case like this again.

A frequent topic of the speakers, particularly Dexter, during one Go Diamond weekend was a disease he had given the acronym HUB. It was an acronym that stands for Head-Up-Butt disease. Who had it? It seemed his answer was anyone who would not agree with him, Amway, or *the system*. If you were a Democrat or not going Diamond, you had it. If you had a job, you had a *serious* HUB. It seemed to go on and on. We were so tired in those meetings. It was a bizarre scene to have a few hundred Emeralds and Diamonds who were trying to sit in rapt attention, when most all of them were fighting to stay conscious. People’s heads would be nodding as they dozed off to sleep out of total exhaustion. Some fell asleep sitting up and actually started drooling on themselves.

At one of these Emerald and Diamond meetings, Amway Diamond Bob Howard was lying prone across four chairs next to me with his arms folded across his chest. He looked like a corpse and was completely out. Birdie Yager talked about how tired she was at one of the meetings. Dexter was prodding her to speak and she did not want to comply.

They were both on stage and he told her to go off stage and get her notes to speak. She said she hadn't slept in something like 20 hours.

The most bizarre of Dexter's teachings, in my opinion, were his sex talks. Remember, as you read this, that neither the general public nor the average distributor were ever made aware of what went on at these leadership meetings. By the time people got to these meetings, they had been well indoctrinated. Also, remember that these meetings were normally started with a prayer. At one of our first few high-level leadership level meetings, very late at night, Dexter decided to share a business secret that a woman Diamond had passed on regarding the success she and her husband enjoyed. The advice he passed on to the ladies present concerned how to relate to their husbands. The advice was to "screw their brains out." People were actually taking notes!

At another Emerald meeting, Dexter had been talking about ineffective goal setting. He chose a couple of friends of ours for the example du jour. He asked them their names and then used them in his example. His analogy started something like this: "Let's say Tim and Brianna go to their room tonight and have sex with the goal of impregnating Brianna, but they use a condom." The details beyond this are too bizarre to write, but a great deal of time was spent on sperm trying to get through the condom. Somehow, this illustrated poor planning or taking an action that was in conflict with your objective(s).

At the last Go Diamond seminar we attended, it seemed nearly the entire function revolved around sex. At one point, the women were brought to a separate room and given specific direction, but there were many speakers who addressed the entire group on this topic. Dexter had had a stroke and felt it was important to advise us that it had occurred on a night when Birdie had refused him sex. (I cannot remember what the point was that time.) On one occasion, he compared the Amway business to sex and said, "Even when it's bad, it's good."

The bizarre was often offset by something that seemed truly good, honorable, and useful. We had Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's, come and speak to a fairly small group of us. He and Dexter talked about how much they had in common. Dave was a wonderful, kind man and exactly as he appeared on his television commercials. He spoke of hard work, ethics, and values. These were the same things we seemed to represent.

On another occasion, Reverend Jerry Falwell came in and spoke. His support and praise of both Dexter and Amway reinforced that we were part of something good. For instance, the Internet guys had really caused some problems for us by writing hateful, unsubstantiated criticism of Amway and posting it on the World Wide Web. (I was online, but did not visit these sites because I wanted to avoid negative.) Mr. Falwell did us a big favor by writing a nice letter that went on Dexter Yager's Internet Services site.

We were taught that the appropriate response was to advise anyone who found information on the Internet that it was not trustworthy, because anyone can post something there. Anyone taking time from his life to tear down something good obviously was a failure with an ax to grind. We were told that anti-Amway website owner Sidney Schwartz was a paid agent of our competitor, Proctor and Gamble. That certainly explained it. We advised people to take advice only from others who lived the way they wanted to live. If you wanted to succeed in Amway, the shortcut was to take advice from people who had enjoyed huge success. We used many analogies to reinforce this. If someone got the Internet information or spoke to a former distributor who had quit, we would ask them several questions to turn their thinking around.

We trained our people to ask someone with hostile information if they would like their twelfth-grade son or daughter to get advice on college from someone who just quit. Better yet, would you want your newly engaged daughter to get advice from a bitter, angry person who just got divorced? We just needed to teach people how to think things through more logically. They could not afford to make a decision that could impact their entire life based upon innuendo and false rumors. Anyone who had time to surf the net was obviously not building his business. One Diamond came in and told a scary story about one of his Directs who had his wife leave him for someone she met while surfing on the “net.” We needed to keep away from the Internet and stay focused. Satan wanted us to be distracted and confused. Perhaps he wasn’t the *only* one.

That Carrot on a Stick

“Successful people will always do what losers refuse to do.”

*

— Amway Crown Ambassador Birdie Yager

Some time after we got back from a Go Diamond meeting, Zack called a Directs’ meeting. At this meeting, he advised that his attorney had reviewed the Business Support Materials Arbitration Agreement and we all **had to** sign it to protect ourselves. He advised that it was put in place to protect us if some stupid distributor wanted to file suit against us for selling him tools. Patty and I ignored the agreement even though Kerry asked us about it a couple times. I did not want to sign it! It appeared we were giving up or limiting *our* legal rights. We would never use this for any reason, but I did not like being forced into giving up rights in a business that proclaimed freedom for its members. It seemed to be a contradiction to me.

We thought the issue would just fade away, but it did not. One day Kerry called us and gave us an ultimatum. He had spoken with Zack, who told him that anyone who buys any tools **must** sign this form. There were no other options. Kerry advised us that Zack had given him specific instructions. We were to be told we would not be allowed to pick up our Amway products, books, tape-of-the-week, or other support materials for our organization unless we came over with a signed BSMAA form. This represented a gun to my head. Tools were the life-blood of our business. Not to get tape-of-the-week to your organization would mean near instant destruction. Our entire organization had been taught there was a 0% success rate outside of the system (meaning not listening to tapes), yet we were going to be cut off from this support system totally if we did not comply. We would completely fall from grace from Zack’s viewpoint and that, too, would spell destruction for our business. No one, and I mean *no one*, challenged him or his authority. I was fearful of him. I did not know what Zack was capable of. We had no choice but to relent or lose everything. We never thought we would sue anyone, particularly our upline partners. It was just the fact that a right was being forcibly stripped from us.

That happened at a time when more and more hostile information was being

* Birdie Yager, *Ladies Session Saturday Morning Part II*, Stock GDL 96-2

posted on the Internet. We began to get many questions on the tool business. Prospects would tell us they had researched it and found the Diamonds made their money off the tapes and seminars. How ridiculous! We checked upline to see how to handle these issues and were told the tapes and seminars were done “at cost.” At times, there was actually a loss on some functions and the Diamond would absorb it. If there was a surplus, it was held to absorb any future losses. We were lucky our upline Diamonds were willing to invest so much for our success without a guarantee of a return. Crown Ambassador Birdie Yager assured distributor leaders in a large public meeting that she and Dexter make no money off the tools and never have. I had seen the copies of big Amway checks that both Dexter and Zack showed. We could even order copies of a set of Zack’s Amway bonus checks to use as a promotional tool. The small tool discount Patty and I were given did not even cover our expenses, so we had no reason to think the information we received about the tool business was true.

We received word that the Philippine Islands were going to open up. The word went out to our group to discover who had contacts over there. We had a growing group of medical professionals in the Philadelphia and Western New Jersey area who were from the Philippines. Four leaders in our group, counting myself, had significant contacts. We each decided, after counseling with Zack, to go to kick off The Business. We would all share in 25% of the cost of each trip.

Kerry and Chris called and reported that their direct sponsor above them, Larry, decided he wanted to get in on this action and gave us money to buy Philippine Amway kits for him. They insisted we put them above us in the line of sponsorship there. They were to be sponsored by Zack and all of them would be in the line of sponsorship *above* us, even though they never planned to go to the Philippines and build The Business. This was a violation of Amway’s Rules of Conduct for international business. Larry also refused to chip in and share the cost for any of the four initial trips. They insisted we take care of their businesses as a courtesy. We did it just to keep the peace.

I left on my trip and flew from Philadelphia to Chicago to Japan and then over to the Philippines. It was a very long trip. It was a little scary, because I did not know a single person in this country by sight. I got off the plane, found my luggage, and proceeded to a crowded area near the street. I was surprised to see military personnel there on duty with machine guns. It was late at night and very hot. At first, I could not locate the driver who was to meet me holding a sign with my name on it. We finally met and he drove me to a cheap motel outside of Manila. I was very fearful for my life, as everything in this area had steel bars on the windows and doors. I hoped and prayed that nothing would happen to me. Since our credit was shot, I only had a Visa debit card and actually only had \$54 in that account. I was scheduled to do meetings on several southern islands, in the business district of Makati, and in a town two hours to the north. I had just enough money to cover the flights and boat rides to each.

My trip to one island was eventful. I was invited to stay with a wonderful family. They did not have running water and I bathed out of a large bucket in the morning. I did meetings throughout that island in homes and in a school building with the aid of an interpreter. With his help, I learned parts of the two Philippine dialects in order to greet people in their own language. This small show of respect opened many doors.

A feast was prepared for me, consisting of many types of seafood, including raw clams and a delicacy named *balut*. I loved the seafood and could do the raw clams, but

the *balut* was a challenge. I finally managed to get it down, because showing others honor and respect is of universal importance. *Balut* may have been a test of my sincerity. It was a duck egg that was taken from the nest a few days before it hatched and then boiled. A small hole is broken in the top and salt is placed around the opening. When you look in, you see a jelly-like little duck looking up at you, and the bottom two-thirds of the egg looks like pure yolk. I took a deep breath and realized just how badly I wanted to be a Diamond as I swallowed my *balut*, nearly whole, to the cheers of the group present. I was accepted as a friend from that point on.

I made my way, by boat and plane, back to Manila and was met by a guide I hired to take me to a small town called Tarlac, about two hours to the north. There we met a very influential businessman who had invited about 45 people to his home for a meeting. His home was too small for this crowd, so we went to his backyard. The heat was blistering for me, but average for the local folks. I stood in the shade of a garage and spoke through an interpreter to the group — mostly women. It was clear they were not getting the message or did not yet relate at all to me. I was hot and getting frustrated at my inability to connect with them. At last, I had a brainstorm and told them if they built this business, they would have enough money to buy more shoes than Imelda Marcos. Once the translator repeated what I had said, they laughed hysterically and we finally connected. I actually sponsored quite a few of these women. All this public speaking had sharpened my ability to think on my feet. Once again, I felt good about what I was doing, but my celebration was bittersweet, as I spent Easter alone in my hotel a world apart from Patty and our children.

The next day I returned to Manila, carrying a sign with my name on it, to meet people at a posh downtown hotel lobby. This was where the Yager organization was putting on large open meetings. Outside of the open meeting room was a set of very large tables covered with books and tapes to teach these people how to become successful. I went into another office-type room where each of Dexter's major Diamonds had a table to sign up new distributors. I met and sponsored my contact there. At the time, I did not know it, but in the same room was a woman named Ruth Carter. She would later play a very large role in the process of opening my eyes to some huge problems in The Business to which I had dedicated my life. She was there from her home in Florida as an employee of a Yager Diamond, helping to run his organization as it expanded into this area.

In somewhat the same time frame, our organization was expanding into Europe. This came about from two distributors in our group who had contacts overseas. One was a Direct, an eye surgeon. The other was a successful travel agency owner. They had contacts in multiple countries, all of which sounded great. Here we were with a business that had grown from regional to national to global. And yet, Patty's and my net annual income as Emeralds hovered near or below \$30,000. After taxes, we were near the poverty level for a family of five.

We sponsored a couple, Dick and Elena, who owned businesses in New Jersey. I traveled a great deal and started to do more and more meetings for them. In one meeting, I showed the plan to a computer consultant. He was a sharp guy and was very much interested in The Business. I was supposed to go back in two days to help him get started. Dick called me the next day and sounded concerned. The computer consultant had gone online and claimed Amway had been involved in fraud in Canada. He also brought up the issue of the Diamonds making most of their income from seminars and the sale of books

and tapes, not Amway. He even mentioned the cult issue, but said it sounded silly to him.

I got online and found Sidney Schwartz's web site as well as Ashley Wilkes' web site. They made my blood boil with their stupid claims of cultism and other non-issues. I had been trained thoroughly and was an expert at explaining away and minimizing these issues. We lost the computer consultant, but Dick and Elena stayed in because they trusted me implicitly. However, since Dick was a level-headed businessman, his sincere concern gave *me* reason to think twice.

I started to go to the web sites and read negative, hostile information about The Business. It made me start to doubt and have negative thoughts. I began to feel some panic, but managed to block it all out. I was unable to discern what was at the core of my feelings. I had developed enough control that I automatically blocked all negative thoughts. However, the negative evidence was so overwhelming that at times it felt as though an unspecified darkness was overcoming me that I could not identify or control.

I had sponsored a single man, Chris, and two couples.* We were working towards Diamond and our business was becoming more profitable. One of the couples, Dave and Eileen, were doing well and sponsored five people almost immediately. We had a great time together. They began growing quickly. We sponsored another really nice couple, Tim and Linda. They were a Christian couple with twin girls. He was a graphic designer and was very gifted at what he did. At times, he would do a newsletter for us to make it look professional. We received a hand-drawn newsletter from Kerry and Chris that contained multiple misspelled words and a stick figure drawing to promote some meeting for our group. I would not pass this down to our organization, which now had many professionals in it. I did not want to start a power struggle and did not say anything to Kerry and Chris. I just faxed it to Tim, who made a professional piece with the exact same information on it and we sent it to the group.

One of our Directs, who had been enlisted to spy on us, had received a copy of the original hand-drawn version directly from Kerry. He immediately reported the change. We were told never to do this again. Next, Kerry and Chris got our Directs' fax numbers and began sending newsletters directly to them to make certain we would not take it upon ourselves to make them look professional. This was showing signs of insanity. We were working like animals in what we thought was our own business. How could it be that near the pinnacle of so-called success, we did not have the authority to send a grammatically correct newsletter to the organization which we drove and flew hundreds of thousands of miles to build? I thought we owned *our own* business.

I was slowly coming out of the system-induced coma I had been in for years. Zack was revealing his true colors more and more. I was beginning to think he was not the warm, loving Christian mentor I had once believed him to be. He was looking more and more like an angry little tyrant. Something in my spirit had died. I struggled to go through the motions of The Business. A complete blanket of darkness had overtaken me. I could not see it, but I could feel it, and it was like a lead coat of arms I could not take off. I was absolutely physically and emotionally drained. I began to suffer chronic nightmares and crying jags. I still went through the motions of The Business, but in a near catatonic state. Once I got in my car, to go to Dick and Elena's, and Patty came to the car to see me off. Tears were silently streaming down my face and I did not even know why. She asked me what was wrong and I did not even know. I just drove off. She had to be thinking I was

* I have changed their names for this account in order to protect them

losing my mind. I knew I was having trouble holding it together.

Negative thoughts were invading my mind, even though I knew how deadly this could be to our future. This was insane. We were closer to Diamond now than we ever had been. We were moving Amway starter kits in six legs now. Our income was slowly coming up. We were buried in a deep sea of debt, but we were now making payments to the IRS to keep them from filing a lien on our home. Now we had three mortgages. The IRS eventually filed a lien and we had four liens against our home now. The seminars depressed me as I still perceived something was very wrong, but I continued to unconsciously block it out. It almost seemed as if there were two of me arguing constantly in my thoughts. It was a draining process. I spaced out on Patty and the kids every day. I would hear them question me, “Daddy, why do we have to ask you something four times before you hear us?” Patty got used to saying, “Earth to Eric. Come in, Eric,” to snap me out of the psychological daze. Something was very wrong with me.

I continued in an emotional stupor to build The Business, but felt almost sick most of the time. I lost my appetite and about ten pounds in short order. An enormous conflict was going on within me that I did not understand. Those leaders in our organization who knew me very well could sense something was wrong. They would, however, not mention it because to question upline was inappropriate. I used to be the kind of strong person who could not tolerate fear in myself, but now I was riddled with fears.

When I was in my early twenties, I had a low self-esteem and was generally fearful. So, I pushed myself into situations where I had to confront and overcome my fears. This is one reason I had gone into the Marine Corps Officer Training program. It was very, very tough, but I made it. For the same reason, I took up skydiving. I hated the fact that it terrified me. It took me making 54 jumps until it did not scare the heck out of me. I continued skydiving from as high as 10,000 feet until I had just under 100 jumps in. It was great fun once you passed the fear barrier. Once the irrational level of fear was gone, there was no better feeling than jumping out and, in ten seconds, hitting terminal velocity of 120 mph.

I learned to hang glide in California, and I rock climbed and rappelled down cliff faces in Pennsylvania. I had a motorcycle and drove it faster than anyone with any common sense. I tell you all this not to blow my own trumpet, but to give you a reference point. I was used to overcoming any fear, but now I was scared to death, **completely terrified** by the darkness that engulfed me. The terror was inside of me. It was part of me, like a cancer. I went to sleep in fear and woke up in a panicked state. There was literally no rest or escape from whatever was beginning to happen.

I was still building The Business and could mask my problems from those who did not know me well. One day, Tim, the graphic designer, called and was enraged. I had been working with him to develop his organization. We were like brothers, so I was taken off guard by his tirade. From what I could gather, he was “disgusted with me and the fact that I called myself a Christian brother.” He told me he was fully aware of the whole Brig Hart situation. I did not know what he was talking about, but he did not believe me. He yelled at me, saying he was fully aware of the whole tool income situation and was quitting. I told him about the small tool break we received as Emeralds, and he acknowledged that it did not even cover the cost of multiple trips I had made to Maine to show the plan *for him*. In any event, he said the whole “Brig Hart issue” blew him out (Amway slang for someone leaving the organization), and if I was sincerely not aware of

it, I needed to go online. Then, he just hung up on me.

I couldn't believe it. How pathetic! Tim was going to flush his whole future based on some trash on the Internet, posted by someone he would never know. This forced me to go and turn my computer on and do a search under Brig's name. I needed to get some information to do damage control to shut him up, so he wouldn't go and blow other good people out of The Business. I knew of Brig Hart only in that he was a very charismatic, former hippie surfer from Jacksonville, Florida, who had turned multi-millionaire Amway Double Diamond. I did research and found information regarding a lawsuit over tool money between Brig and Lita Hart, Dexter Yager, Internet Services Corp., and a host of other Amway Diamonds. It was quite a lengthy document and provided a lot of information I was not yet able to comprehend. The suit alleged that other Amway Diamonds had conspired and circumvented Brig and Lita Hart and had cut them out of the tool and seminar income generated by their organization. Specifically, the lawsuit alleged that Dexter Yager and other defendants had violated racketeering (RICO) laws and stated:

Plaintiffs have been injured and continue to be injured in their business and property -- both in their Amway business and in their Amway-related business support materials distribution business -- by reason of the Distributor Defendants' foregoing pattern of racketeering activity in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1962(c) in an amount exceeding \$50,000,000.00. Plaintiffs are entitled to recover this sum, additional damages proven at trial of this matter, treble the amount of these damages, plus costs, interest and reasonable attorneys' fees from the Distributor Defendants for their RICO violations.¹

This was incredibly confusing. Patty and I had been told all along that the tool business was run essentially at cost and was simply a training system used to support growth in the Amway business. Can you imagine that a single Diamond-level distributor, who only had part of his tool income taken from him, alleged the **actual** amount of damages, excluding punitive damages sought, exceeded \$50,000,000? Now, this was totally confusing to me. The lawsuit also revealed the alleged magnitude of Dexter Yager's tool business that operated under the Internet Services Corporate name. The suit charged the following:

Yager derives a substantial portion of his income from the sale of business support materials down the lines of distribution in the Amway Network. On information and belief, over 70% of Yager's Amway-related income is derived from the sale of business support materials, constituting \$40,000,000.00 per year in gross income.²

¹ Case number 97-349-CIV-J-20B filed in the Jacksonville Division of the Middle District Court

² Ibid.

The Truth Will Set You Free

"We are the number one opportunity. Folks, we've got ... I bet we got about 60 corporations now, international.. around the world and domestically. And it takes a lot of business investment, income investment to get those things started. But guess what the best business investment that we have ever made in our history? This Amway business. Why does Dexter Yager spend 100% of his time in this Amway business with as much money as he's got? Cause it's still the best opportunity out there that we have seen."*

— Jeff Yager (son of Dexter & Birdie)

There were a large number of distributor lawsuits and other disturbing information on Sidney Schwartz's web site called *Amway: The Untold Story*. I was neither shocked nor outraged. I did not read any more information and shut my computer off and blocked out the negative. I knew at my core this was not true!

I called Tim back and gave him the standard song and dance about there being no profit in the tool business and explained that even Diamonds could get screwed up and do crazy things. I did not know why Brig did this. I downplayed and minimized the situation, as I had been trained to do, but I was unable to turn Tim around. He was still not comfortable with The Business. We parted on friendly terms, but I thought he was stupid, just throwing his future away. At least he was going to go away quietly. That was all that mattered. I handled it well enough to assure he would do no harm to the organization.

Kerry happened to call for some reason and we had a long talk. We were on the phone for about fifteen minutes as I explained the situation to him. He was sympathetic and I felt proud that I handled it as a Diamond would. Diamonds don't get upset over challenges or about distributors who quit. They just solve challenges, forget the "losers," and move on. At one Directs' meeting, a Diamond told the group of leaders to stop licking their wounds and worrying about people who quit. He said we needed to learn to "bury the dead."³

I spoke with Kerry about another issue. He was calling a training session at the local Quality Inn and our entire group had to attend. He informed me we were to charge \$10 a couple. I felt we were bleeding the group to death with meetings like this. This would create a profit of nearly \$500 that he would keep. I had spoken with Zack about how to price these meetings and Zack suggested we charge just enough to cover the cost. We were never to use our group as an income source. Dexter had made a similar comment at an Emerald meeting and warned us not to have meetings just to create income. I shared this with Kerry in a non-threatening way. He shot back a response that

* GDL 97-23 audiotape, *Friday Evening*, Copyright InterNET Services Corporation

³ Directs meeting 1/99

this was “policy” and would not be changed. I was bringing around 95% of the distributors who would be coming and told him if he was going to rape the group for money, we would not be attending. Surprisingly, he seemed to take it well and said he would think about it.

As Kerry seemed to report our every action to Zack, we hoped we might again be in good favor after handling the Brig Hart issue so well. We had made it a non-issue. For the first time in awhile, we were not fearful to be seeing Zack. We felt as if we had redeemed ourselves by handling things well and continuing to grow. Zack and Molly came in and were, as usual, greeted like royalty. It wasn’t long until we were summoned to an afternoon Emerald and Diamond meeting with Molly, Zack, and about twenty of their key leaders. We waited at the hotel banquet room until Molly and Zach arrived fashionably late. They spoke to most of the leaders in the room and we settled down for our meal. Someone asked a blessing and we had a nice lunch.

Another Diamond collected a large amount of money from us all to pay for our meals, the room, and Zack and Molly’s meal. This was customary, as it would be disrespectful for them to have any cost while they were there to give so much to us. We were reminded again and again that we could not afford their time if they billed us for it. On many occasions, Zack would remind us that he pays more taxes in a week than he used to make in a year as a teacher. We still felt truly fortunate that, at his level of wealth, he would continue to spend time helping us.

Someone introduced Zack with gratitude and we greeted him with loud hoots and applause. He talked about a few minor details and then launched into the most vicious verbal attack we had ever witnessed. He opened the topic by telling us that anyone who was on the Internet researching negative “crap” about Amway was really screwed up. You would have to be some sort of “Satan-possessed, freaking moron” to be doing something like that. He went on for some time about allowing Satan to control your mind and do great evil. Zack was normally in total control, but he was going over the edge with this talk. We still were oblivious to what was really going on, but we began to get the idea. He said, “You are on the Internet researching negative crap about Amway and you find information about Brig Hart, for example.” Patty and I were horrified, as we realized that *I* was the person he was referring to as the “*Satan-possessed, freaking moron.*”

The tirade became increasingly more venomous and the group listened in a stunned silence, wondering who the moron was. The verbal attack became so vicious that tears welled up in Molly’s eyes. We all sat paralyzed in silent fear. I was afraid he was going to point me out to all present. He explained the Brig Hart situation by saying that Brig was listening to some “stupid attorney” instead of his upline. The “dumb attorney” gave him “stupid advice,” and he sued his upline over nothing. He must have lost his mind, but he has since realized the error of his ways because he sent a formal letter of apology to every member of his upline and dropped the whole thing.

This was the biggest line of hogwash I had ever heard. Brig was a very astute, wealthy Double Diamond with hundreds of thousands of people in his organization. There was no more information on the suit online, so it was most likely settled out of court. You do not get ripped off for \$50,000,000 and then apologize to the people who stole it from you. I knew intuitively that Zack had probably just lied to every one of his leaders and put enough fear in them that they would never check the facts. Was he now becoming a very evil person or had I just been blind to his dark side before?

This verbal rampage went on for half an hour. The group present did not make a sound. Kerry was taking notes and sheepishly looked at me as if he did not know what was going on. I saw him as a pathetic coward. He would never have the courage to honestly talk to me about issues. No, instead he would agree to my face and then run to Zack with things like this to prove he was the most loyal. Zack finally concluded his tirade by saying that Brig did not have the guts to show up at Amway's annual Diamond Club in Hawaii and it was a good thing "for his sake" he did not. What did he think they were going to do to him, break his knees? This was starting to sound like the Mafia and was getting increasingly bizarre.

The group of leaders present sat in a stunned, total silence at what just happened. We had never heard him refer to *anyone* as a freaking moron, let alone one of us. I looked nervously at my watch. This verbal whipping lasted almost exactly one hour. Zack then praised anyone who would bring situations of this nature to his attention. Kerry had just been rewarded for spying on us by being noted as the most loyal. This was a strange situation because Kerry had almost no one left in his group other than us. Loyalty was obviously more important than any other virtues, such as salesmanship or business ability or even good people skills. Total, complete, and unquestioning loyalty seemed to be more important than serving your organization and succeeding for your family's sake. The group was then admonished to report any other negative speech or actions of other leaders to him immediately. This was for the benefit of the whole group. He did not want one "off-track nut" hurting the whole organization and the future of thousands. Zack was dumbfounded as to how "some people" could be so incredibly stupid. We all needed to read more, pray more, and listen to more tapes to keep our minds right.

That was more crushing than I can ever express. Zack had become my surrogate father. He was a man I wanted to emulate; I wanted him to be proud of me. He had been a real-life hero to me and to our children. I was having trouble ignoring the contradictions in his behavior, though. I was also having a very difficult time processing the information I now possessed.

The rest of the meeting followed the usual format as we planned out topics for the next seminar where we would each speak as Emeralds and Diamonds. There were many seminars in his organization on the same Saturday, so Patty and I would speak at as many as three in one day. We were not paid because we were fortunate to be asked to serve the group and have other speakers speak to *our* people. There were thousands of people at these seminars who were paying between \$12-\$400 to attend these **monthly** functions. Then, there were the two tapes of the week for \$13.20, the video-of-the-month, and the book-of-the-month, in addition to other training sessions. Zack had told us he had over 100,000 distributors in his group. You do the math... I was beginning to put it all together. Tim may have been right. Zack was making money off the books, tapes, and seminars. No, he couldn't be doing that! He had told us there were many expenses and losses involved. But, it could not be true. I knew it was not possible. Or was it?

I glanced over at our Emeralds, Rick and Paula, and they were in a total state of disbelief as to what we had all just witnessed. The meeting closed and Zack walked directly to me. My heart was racing not knowing what he was about to do. He shook my hand, greeted us warmly, told us he loved Patty and me, and he knew this would be our Diamond year. This knocked me so far off balance I was unable to think clearly. I felt like circuits were blowing in my mind. Rick, Paula, Patty, and I walked in a silent fog to our

cars and drove without speaking. Something was very, very wrong here. On the way home, I knew Patty was as unhappy as I was, but we could not communicate negative at this level, yet. We were silently enraged over Kerry's pathetic, childish tattling on us.

We had the training session, and the group was taken advantage of by having \$10 a couple extracted from them. I was unable to protect the people I loved the most from being bled dry for a seemingly unending number of constant, mandatory meetings. We had so many of those meetings, training sessions, seminars, leadership meetings, Artistry sessions, men's meetings, and full-weekend and week-long travel seminars that it was difficult to find time to build The Business. We were perplexed beyond belief, but as incredulous as it sounds, we believed we still had to forge on to Diamond. We were not yet capable of either rational or free thought.

Actually, we no longer had the ability to *reason*. Lacking this capacity, I still believed this was a good business. We must just be dealing with a few bad apples. Once we went Diamond, we could run our own organization and treat people with compassion, integrity, and a servant's heart. Once we became Diamonds, Zack would understand that we had always been truly loyal — not only to him, but also to the virtues on which The Business was founded. He would know he could trust us. More than ever, we had to get the job done. Patty continued to take care of all the details of our home, our children, and her husband, who now suffered near catatonic episodes.

We had brought thousands into our organization and needed to succeed for their sake as well as our own. We were trapped with an upline who seemed bent on destroying us if we showed even the slightest appearance of disloyalty. We had been branded as disloyal and negative and so had lost face with Zack. We were doomed. It took a supreme effort for me to keep the darkness at bay. It was killing me. I was tormented continually by my own conflicting thoughts. I tried to shut out the negative thoughts, but I struggled more and more because, on some level or other, it was starting to sink in that *the negative thoughts might very well be the truth*. That concept was more horrifying than any other, because an entire decade of my life would have been lost to a manipulative system that ate people like me alive.

"It's not about ego. It's serving other people. That's what Dexter is all about. Serving your fellow man...."*

— Amway Crown Jody Victor

* Jody Victor, *It's Unbelievable* audiocassette, Stock No. DBR 987

The Walls Come a' Tumblin' Down

*"When you're loyal to upline, it's being loyal to God."**

— Amway Double Diamond, Linda Harteis

The financial counsel we received was dead wrong. Despite the fact we told Zack we owed back taxes on our home and back Federal taxes to the IRS, he insisted we go on the next two trips. He said he was certain we were resourceful enough to find a way. He brought up the fact that we missed the \$5,000 Alaskan leadership cruise and informed me that it cost me a lot by not attending. The next trip coming up would be a trip to his 3,000 acre ranch in southwestern Colorado. The trip after that would be a Directs' trip to Cancun. As usual, of course, this had to be booked with a form he provided through his agent, Convention Concepts. A travel agent in our organization later advised us we could have booked both the airfare and hotel for what we paid for the hotel alone.

In any event, Patty and I processed this information differently. I did not know at the time, but she had been almost totally off the tapes for close to a year. I thought she was a little negative, as she began questioning things, starting with Zack's outrageous financial advice in wanting us to attend these expensive trips.

A couple of days later, without my knowledge, she called Molly and told her she was confused. She repeated the gist of what we had already told her and Zack both in writing and in person. Once again, Patty explained we were broke. We could lose our home to tax sale and we owed the IRS and many other creditors lots of money. We drove good-looking junk cars that we could barely afford to keep on the road. Given all this, Patty asked, were they sure we were supposed to find a way to borrow even more money to go on these trips? Molly stammered and said, "No."

Patty felt very relieved, but did not tell me anything of the conversation yet. It would be very negative for her to question my ability to figure it out or to question Zack's counsel. She knew, from repeated badgering at women's sessions, she was not supposed to counsel me because we were at the same income level. The next day, though, she *had* to explain it to me because we had a voice mail from Molly.

The voice mail explained she had checked with Zack and had given Patty inaccurate counsel. *I* should go to both Cancun and Colorado as a leader, but Patty did not have to go. This came as somewhat of a relief, since I would have to raise less money to get to both places. A leader never misses any meeting or an opportunity to get around their upline to learn. While I was moderately relieved, Patty was appalled, but she would not speak of it for over a year, due to the internalized system rules regarding "negative"

* Linda Harteis, *Ladies Meeting Tuesday Afternoon Part I*, Stock No. GDL 96-35, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

and supporting your husband. She knew this advice sounded insane. She also knew I would not defy Zack and destroy what I believed to be our family's only hope for a future. Zack's responses confused me, but I wanted to trust his advice. I no longer enjoyed any contact with him and no longer liked him. Strangely, part of me still thought he just did not understand us yet and would come around soon. However, the truth we were about to discover was worse than anything we could have imagined.

I traveled across the country for his leadership meeting at the log mansion he had built on his land. It was a long trip. Kerry and I flew out together to Colorado Springs and rented a Ford Explorer for the two-hour drive to the ranch. He could act almost normal at times when he was away from Chris, the group, and Zack. As soon as we arrived, Zack greeted us in the driveway. We were tired from the trip, but, no sooner had we stepped from the truck, than he shook our hands and pointed to an oil spot on the new concrete driveway that he wanted us to clean. He gave us specific instructions, so as not to ruin the rag. We cleaned the spot immediately. Welcome to Colorado. We were unpaid servants. Was I the only one who saw this? It seemed I could perceive things, as the other Emeralds and Diamonds talked, that I could not when I was so deeply into *the system*. Perhaps it is more accurate to say, when *the system* was more deeply into me. Something was very wrong, but I still could not identify the problem.

I returned from this trip feeling more and more tormented and confused. I prepared for and flew to Cancun for the Directs' trip. I was completely broke and barely had enough money for food for the whole trip. This only reinforced my feelings that I must be the biggest failure in the world. Here I was completely destitute and in Cancun without my wife and family. This was insane. I made excuses not to go on most of the excursions and trips when invited; however, bad news hit when Larry, our upline Direct, decided the whole group should go on a bus trip to the South. It cost quite a bit. Most all the distributors went and I had no choice. If I did not go, the rest of my group might follow my lead and ruin his plan. My funds were wiped out.

It's funny how anger can sometimes clear the brain. I was finally getting angry enough to be able to think and spot the contradictions. For instance, a dinner was held at which the Diamonds lectured us. Two Diamonds stood up and announced we needed to learn to be productive if we wanted to be successful. They bragged that even though all of us had been in Cancun for four days at an oceanfront hotel, they had not seen the beach once. They had been busy counseling their people and getting counseled by Zack. I shook my head. This was so pathetic. They emphasized the pleasures of the incredible Diamond lifestyle, and then these zombies came to a beachfront hotel in Cancun with their wives, and proudly announced they worked too hard to visit the beach. What had they been smoking? As usual, the group of leaders at my table took notes furiously in an attempt to better understand this "wisdom."

In The Business, distributors are admonished never to take a family vacation until they go Direct. This teaches them good goal setting and the benefits of delayed gratification. The problem is that 99% of distributors never *will* go Direct. Others, who sacrifice for years, may finally go Direct, but only after taking extraordinary time from their families. Many have not taken a vacation in years, in deference to their upline's "wise" counsel. They instead took their vacation money and put it into Zack's coffers.

The next to speak Diamond ripped up one side and down the other of distributors who had brought their children. This was a business meeting and an opportunity to

receive counsel from members of your upline. You might have a rare chance to spend ten minutes with Zack, but he would not be able to counsel you with your kids climbing all around. I was disgusted. I missed my family so much. These people seemed like raving lunatics, talking out of both sides of their mouths. We were lied to. We were still being told that The Business took twelve to fifteen hours a week of “TV time” when our kids were sleeping.

It was supposed to give us family time, as we developed large, so-called residual incomes. The truth is we ended up working all the times our kids needed us. We were gone almost constantly on nights and weekends, when they were home. Some of these poor kids hardly ever saw their parents, particularly their fathers. It seemed outrageous that these hardworking distributors were now being reprimanded for bringing their precious children on a trip to spend time together. What a wake-up call! These Diamonds seemed to have gone off the deep end. The life they were promoting was bizarre and unlivable — one I wanted no part of. The upline is *not* more important than anything else.

There was something very, very wrong here. I went home, got online, and began to read many of the lawsuits against Amway, Dexter Yager, and other Kingpin distributors like Bill and Peggy Britt. What we found was a lot of information that revealed not only that there *was* income from the tools, but also that this income would be a **large** portion of the Amway Diamond’s income. How could that be possible? Had they **all** lied to us? I went back and re-read the whole Brig Hart lawsuit and many others.

To Be or Not to Be

*“To use competing products, to question the Amway system, to associate with friends who try to steal your Dream by deriding Amway, is, by implication, allying yourself with the forces of darkness and despair and poverty against the forces of light and hope and wealth.”**

— Stephen Butterfield

There was an enormous amount of what I believed to be truly hostile, negative information about Amway and its key distributor leaders. One web site had information about a Canadian Fraud case, for which Amway had to pay a multimillion-dollar fine. What was the real truth? The Amway Corporation was founded, owned, and run by solid Christian families, wasn’t it? Some big distributors might have done things to give Amway bad press, but I was certain they had not committed fraud. Whoever put those web sites up was way overboard.

There was quite a bit of information regarding how incredibly expensive Amway products were in comparison to similar products you could buy off the shelf at the store. The party line immediately flashed across my mind. “These people simply did not understand the power of concentration. Amway products were very concentrated and, as

* Butterfield, Stephen, *Amway, The Cult of Free Enterprise*, Copyright 1985, p.29

such, lasted much longer than a competitor's products." They were not comparing apples to apples in this so-called price review. I was very surprised people would take this amount of time to put together a web site like this, when they could be doing something productive with their lives.

As I did more Internet searches under "*Amway*," I found more web sites with nearly identical complaints. There were many references to cultism and mind-control techniques. Once again, the tapes played through my mind — this was a farce. How could a business that starts training sessions and every seminar with a prayer and a pledge of allegiance to the American flag be a cult? Those charges were ludicrous. It was a shame so much trash was included with the few smaller points that might have had some merit.

In one sense, all the Internet information did not help me. I felt more and more uneasy. I did not know it, but I was still well over a year away from *beginning* to think clearly and to reason without the system-installed paradigms through which I now filtered all information. Unconsciously, I was overcoming my own objections and mentally deleting information that did not conform to the world as I believed it to be. I had read a great deal of negative, harmful, fact-based information, but did not see it. I was operating with a psychological blind spot I would later learn is called, by researchers, a *scotoma*.

Three things happened that shattered the world I knew or believed to exist. The first was a comment my mother-in-law made. Despite all the in-law jokes, I have the world's best mother-in-law. Patty's parents are two of the most kind, gentle, honorable people I have ever known. They also have been very supportive, despite being aware of the near insane schedule we kept and the little real contact we had with them since we got in The Business. They were always there with an encouraging word. This was extremely unusual for people on the "outside."

Patty was talking with her mother one day and her mother remarked, in all kindness, that I had changed. I had been so energetic and full of life and enthusiasm when we got started in The Business. I had told them how much time it was going to give us as a family, but now it seemed like I would see them more if I had two full-time jobs. I was constantly exhausted and the happiness I once had been known for had long since left me.

Patty repeated this to me and I argued with her. I backed her down and overcame her mother's objection with about five automatic, well-rehearsed, rapid-fire analogies. Working for my own business to eventually be totally free was far better than being a broke slave [employee] for the rest of my life.

It made me angry that she would even repeat something like this. The effort to continue overcoming all objections was draining. Deep in my spirit, I knew Patty and her mom were right. Yet, at the same time, I knew this couldn't be a reality, because that would require facing it and making changes. We got in this business almost for the sole purpose of creating enough income to be together full time as a family. I could not surrender what I had cherished the most. Psychologically, I had lost the resources needed for me to even entertain this thought.

The second event that brought a glimmer of truth into my life came from a talk with my son, Adam. He is a very warm, spirited, loving child. He makes friends easily and has nothing bad to say about anyone. I love this boy more than words can possibly express. He is one of the key reasons I had gotten into this business. More than anything, I wanted to have the time with him that divorce had robbed from my relationship with my own father. Being a good father was one of the most important ambitions of my life.

Adam and I were having a quiet talk one afternoon when he asked me a very pointed question. He looked me right in the eye and said, “Dad, when we go Diamond, you’ll be home some, and I’ll see you, right?” Automatically I responded, “Of course,” and described briefly how I was looking forward to it. A feeling of nausea swept over me and I left the room as quickly and inconspicuously as possible.

I nearly vomited as I realized, on a conscious level, that I had just lied to my best friend in the world. For the first time, I allowed myself to think “negative” thoughts and realized the Amway Diamonds were working eight-, ten-, twelve-, and fifteen-hour days up to seven days a week. Although Zack had told of the joys of family time when recruiting us, the truth was far different. At the leadership level, we learned he often watched his own son’s sports victories on video, because he was too busy to be there. Molly had confided in Patty and another Emerald that their youngest daughter had told her she hated her for ever marrying Zack (her father). The Diamonds were gone almost constantly. One Diamond’s son had been electrocuted and killed when he and his wife were away from home. Backstage, I heard one Diamond bragging he had only slept in his own bed eight nights that month because he was on the road so much. So much for the famed Diamond lifestyle. Why had they lied to us? What was the point?

I was crushed by the overwhelming weight of just this small amount of truth. I was an absentee dad. Patty had been a single mother for years. My mind was spinning in a whirlwind of seemingly irrational, tormenting thoughts. What was going on? Part of me knew there was a real problem, but I was completely incapable of discerning the root. In my torment, it was by the grace of God I made a decision that changed my life. I decided to “unplug” from *the system* in ways that would be invisible to the group. I stopped listening to tapes every day and reading books from the approved list. I felt they were keeping me from being able to have clear thoughts.

I stopped showing the plan, and, fortunately, our group was so large that no one knew. They all assumed I was working with other leaders or in new organizations I had been developing. We made mandatory appearances at training sessions, open meetings, and seminars. The longer I was “off the tapes,” the more problems slowly became apparent to me. I was beginning to remember conversations and situations that I had blocked out and not allowed myself to think about. I was backstage hosting a group of Diamond ladies and they were all laughing hysterically. When I got to the table to deliver their drinks, I heard what they thought was so amusing. Several of them were sharing how many times each of them had been so completely busy they had forgotten to pick up their own children at school. What a lifestyle!

The third incident happened within a few weeks of the first two. I got a call from Keith, a Ruby Direct in our organization. He wanted to get together for lunch to go over some things. We had worked together in the corporate world and had grown close over the near decade we had worked together in The Business. He was the only one in our entire organization who worked as hard as I worked. He was a true road warrior. As a matter of fact, he probably worked harder than I did during that last year. He still had a job and would drive on alternating nights to New York and then New Jersey. He would routinely get home between 2-4 a.m. and get up at 7 a.m. to put on his suit and go to work and do the same thing over again. I had been concerned he would actually die on the road and had asked him not to schedule these out of town trips back to back. He, like me, would do anything to buy his freedom to be with his family.

We got together at a Chinese restaurant near his office and settled in for our meal. We went over the usual “fired up” jargon and, suddenly, the mask came off. He was speaking, paused quietly for a moment, and, with tears in his eyes, he told me he had driven 40,000 miles the previous year, had almost never seen his wife or daughters, and made a net income of only about \$4,000. He was one of our most successful, driven distributors. People in his group thought he was making about \$50,000. Hard to believe and yet, from the representations we were all given, he thought I was making over \$100,000. His wife, Lisa, had written him a letter telling him she was sick of being a single mother and would not live like that any longer. He was willing, literally, to die in the pursuit of his freedom. He looked at me, welling up with emotion, seeking the encouragement I had always provided. At that moment, he needed me to tell him it was going to be worth it.

Once again, a wave of shock and physical nausea overcame me. As always, I was careful to not reveal it. How could I possibly reveal something I did not understand? I had worked closely with him and his wife for nearly a decade in business; yet we had never discussed his income. Why was it we would not discuss his income in a business that had a 100% success rate? I had counseled him as we had been counseled. We went over his goal sheet and always discussed his tape and ticket sales. The income was supposed to follow these numbers. I was in a state of complete disbelief and panic as I realized that, of all the details tracked by this vital business building tool, **there was no place to record or track your income.** There was a reason for this! We were not supposed to focus on our income, but the bigger picture of long-term success. I thought I was beginning to grasp what the training had truly been about.

My mind was reeling as another layer of truth was revealed to me. Keith told me he felt like a phony and was having a hard time telling others how great The Business was when he was making almost nothing after nearly a decade of full-time effort. He didn't know what he was doing wrong and felt like a loser. I had thought it was just me who felt like that. We were all psychologically conditioned to believe *we* were the problem if we were not earning what we were supposed to receive. He and I had both worked like animals for pathetic incomes. I was still grappling with what appeared to be a terrible revelation. I was sickened and needed to get out of the restaurant. I recommended he spend some quality time with his wife and girls, as it would help him re-group. He needed it desperately. I left as suddenly as I could without arousing too much suspicion.

I drove for hours in my car, without a tape playing, and began to think somewhat clearly for the first time in as long as I could remember. It was a strange sensation. If what I was now beginning to understand was true, Dexter, Zack, and other Diamonds may have perpetrated perhaps the largest global business fraud in history. At the very least, it appeared they had collaboratively extracted as much as a billion dollars in book, tape, and seminar money by well-coordinated deception. If this was true, I must face an even darker revelation. If all of it was a well-orchestrated fraud, then I had taken in an enormous sum of money for them from the people who I loved the most. Having been an auditor, I quickly ran some numbers in my head and estimated I had collected somewhere in the range of *\$3-\$4 million* — or more — in book, tape, video, and seminar money from my dearest friends and family. Yes, I even collected tool money for the “system of success” from my own father. My mind slammed shut, but there was a storm brewing within me that I would not be able to ignore.

I began a quest for the truth, mostly to prove to myself that my new beliefs were unfounded. I did not want to believe any of this. This was a good, honorable business, predicated upon servanthood. Ronald Reagan, Gerald Ford, Senator Rick Santorum, Jack Kemp, Mary Lou Retton, Jerry Falwell, Billy Zeoli, Charles Stanley, Robert Schuller, Dave Thomas, Dennis Waitely, Zig Ziglar, Oliver North, and Newt Gingrich had directly or indirectly lent their credibility to this organization when they came in to speak at large seminars. Senators and mayors had signed up as distributors. They were all relatively wise people.

We had a large local seminar coming up in our area. We went and it was an agonizing ordeal. We could more clearly see the cesspool of lies we had actually accepted as truth for the past few years. We could barely go through the motions. We were not the speakers, but were frequently used to motivate the group or do specific promotions. Our minds were still racing in an attempt to understand what had happened to our good friends, our leaders, this business, and us. Weren't we all virtuous once? What happened next was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

At the end of the seminar, as was customary, all the Direct couples walked on stage and stood in a semi-circle. All the distributors in the audience would clasp hands and sing "God Bless America." Kerry, the host, made a comment that hit me like a bullet. He looked at the stage full of Direct-, Ruby-, and Emerald-level distributors and made a comment to the effect of look at all the success we have here. "No one is going to say The Business doesn't work here." On the surface, it appeared to be true. They were a well-groomed and well-dressed smiling group of robots. Most drove Cadillacs to the seminar.

I went down the line and did a mental inventory of what they had told us about their situations:

- ∞ One Direct had left his job under bad circumstances and was nearly \$40,000 in debt since getting into Amway.
- ∞ Another had lost his job, due to his militant loyalty to his business and had since started another traditional business, but was nearly \$60,000 in debt.
- ∞ One leader was trying not to get divorced.
- ∞ A dedicated member had fallen asleep at the wheel and crashed his newly purchased white Cadillac.
- ∞ Two of the moms on stage had "retired"— complete with a limousine picking them up at work, but they were now back at jobs.
- ∞ Another Direct had been fired for using his company's phone, truck, and contacts for his Amway business. He is a wonderful, energetic young man, but his self-esteem was destroyed when this happened and he has not gotten it back.
- ∞ Another Profit Sharing Direct was Keith, whose wife had

just written him a letter saying she could not live like that anymore.

- ∞ One other Direct on stage was being audited by the IRS. He was just one of three leaders in our group currently being audited.
- ∞ All three ultimately had large amounts of deductions disallowed and had assessments in the \$5,000 range.
- ∞ One of the Directs above had his wife threaten to leave him several times.

Understand now that the audience believed those of us on stage were making from \$25,000 to over \$100,000 a year and were debt free. The truth is that many of the Direct Distributors were actually running their business at a loss. Yes, they were losing money. We were near bankruptcy as Emeralds. We had to go to a credit counseling service to have them negotiate lower monthly payments from all our creditors so we could stay afloat. The distributors in the audience were making sacrifices of money and time away from their families so they could live as well as those of us on stage. How ironic!

The leaders on stage were not stupid people. Our Directs included an eye surgeon, a lead homicide detective, a professional log buyer, a CPA, two insurance executives, and others. They were the hardest working, most loyal, charismatic group of people I had ever known. They were our family. Sadly, most of them felt like failures as they had been well conditioned to believe everyone else was making out well. Most of them believed, as I had, they were losers and were not making money in this incredible business due to a lack of faith or a poor work ethic. There was not a harder working, tougher group of people. Those men were the road warriors. They were the Marines of Amway. They were the first in and the last out of every meeting. They could live on almost no sleep. They were thankful for the wonderful opportunity and the mentoring of upline millionaires. But they were being slowly destroyed and, all the while, they were thanking and praising those who were taking their money.

After almost 45 days without listening to any tapes, I was beginning to see more clearly. We all clasped hands on stage and Keith's wife led us in singing "God Bless America." I looked out at the beautiful people in the audience, knowing how I had promised to help them build a better life. They smiled and swayed gently as we all sang. Some had hope in their eyes and others had tears of joy in knowing they had now found a way to a better life. I glanced over my shoulder at the well-dressed group of leaders whose lives were in tatters. I now saw the truth that, but could not yet understand how, the average net income for the Emeralds, the Rubys, the Profit Sharing and Silver Direct distributors in this organization was more accurately near **\$3,000 a year** after all their system expenses.

I felt sick. Immense pressure moved from my chest to my head as tormenting, conflicting thoughts screamed through my mind. I could barely breathe as we made a quick exit from the seminar. I could not even reveal this deep shame to Patty or that I felt like I was having a heart attack. I kept on walking and, in about fifteen minutes, my breathing and heart rate returned to normal, but there seemed to be a violent war of

opposing thoughts, beliefs, and emotions raging in my head. I did not understand what was happening to me. Even if I did, I could not “pass this negative” on to Patty. We had enough stress in our own situation without her having to carry the tormenting weight that now rested on my shoulders. I needed an action plan. I needed far more information.

Perhaps if I gathered enough documentation and threatened to go public, Zack would return our business to the honorable status it once held. Incredibly, in my mind, I thought The Business as a whole was good and could be fixed. I had to stay active enough to appear “plugged in.” The only way we could ethically justify going to seminars, training sessions, and open meetings was that I needed to stay undercover at the highest level possible to gather large amounts of documentation directly from representations made by Diamond-level distributors. It was the only way we could ultimately protect our people.

The Ants Go Marching One by One

I was reading enormous volumes of court cases, books, articles, and former distributors’ reflections on Amway, its related motivational organizations and cultism. I somehow “deleted” or literally did not see much of it, as it directly contradicted my beliefs. I would read and re-read the same information and come away blank. This situation did not make any sense to me. I thought I was losing my mind, as I had always been able to read large amounts of text with near total recall of the key points. How could I read forty pages of a simple court case, not remember the key causes for action, or come away with no basic understanding of it? In retrospect, what I was learning was so wrong and so horrific that I could only handle it in gradual stages of revelation. My mind kept putting up buffers to hold me together. The small parts of information I *was* able to perceive were destroying me.

I began doing enormous amounts of research on Amway, going back as far as the early 1960s. I spent as many as 16 hours a day in my little home office at the computer scouring the web. I did not realize it, but I was becoming completely obsessed with discovering and documenting everything. Whatever the truth might be, I would have it in writing. Despite being off “*the system*” for some time now, I had paradigms, thought processes, and automatic emotional responses that were wrong, but still functioned effectively without my consent. I sensed I was not in control of many of my own thoughts and emotions. The feeling was terrifying. Day and night my mind seemed filled with an all-out war of opposing thoughts. The now-constant noise in my head was deafening.

It felt like I was sitting in between two sets of railroad tracks with freight trains careening by, inches from my head, in opposite directions. The noise and confusion were growing in intensity. I was in a fog most of the time I was awake and I was often unaware of what was happening around me, as Patty struggled to hold our family together. The war for my mind, in which I often felt like a spectator, had overtaken me.

I faded in and out psychologically and would have a good day or two. My research continued, as I was now unable to stop my urgent day-in-and-day-out quest for the truth. From what I was reading, it appeared that the vast majority of the Diamonds’ incomes came secretly from the tool business. It was looking as if Amway was just a

good-looking Christian business front that Dexter and his crew used as a front to recruit millions. This immediately linked them into the secret shadow business, which was the big money maker — selling books, tapes, and seminars to their own people. Being a former federal auditor and having testified on the state level for cases involving material misrepresentation, we seemed to have some real legal problems here. It looked like the majority of distributors in the United States had been recruited under completely false pretenses.

These good people were told again and again by the Diamonds of the 100% success rate of *the system*. I had Zack and many others on tapes referring to this “100%” success rate. After recruiting far over 2,000 people into Amway over the years, I only knew of approximately 10 who had made a net income of over **one-dollar** during the last year. To me, that looked like just under a 100% **failure** rate in the Amway business, despite the “system of success.” Remember, also, that was after our organization as a whole had pumped an estimated \$3,000,000 or more into the system. Had all these good people been deceived, raped, and then conditioned to believe they were failures so they would go away quietly once their financial resources had been depleted?

It was a tremendous strain to attend even the minimum of necessary meetings to keep the appearance we were plugged in while I gathered documentation. It was a living hell to knowingly see our good people further seduced. The only thing that kept me going was my loyalty to them. I had to either fix or expose this, for their sake. One of the most difficult of these occasions was when we went to a training session with Zack and Molly in our town. The group was full of excitement and falling all over themselves like Zack and Molly were movie stars or royalty. I feigned enthusiasm, but felt repulsed by their presence.

They began their relatively long talks, as I once again clicked on my tape recorder. What I could now see was a thinly veiled self-promotion. Zack talked about how many thousands of people they had helped make thousands of dollars a month. I knew for certain he was lying. I knew almost everyone in his organization was **losing**, despite their involvement in the alleged system of success and his “wise” leadership. Both Zack and Molly went on to make lifestyle and income-relative representations I believed to be totally false. Not a single person in the room was aware of the fact that they derived a huge income from the books, tapes, and seminars, and Zack was telling them they could not succeed without them. He made references to God and faith, and I wanted to beat him unconscious. My heart screamed, “Don’t use the Lord’s name or scripture to rape these people!” When we exchanged small talk later in the evening, I sensed an evil presence all about him. How could I ever have been convinced by this man?

Yet he was not a stupid man. In addition to being brilliant and charismatic, Zack was uncanny in his perceptive abilities. At times, we thought he could actually read our minds. He had a deep, penetrating gaze that focused on you and seemed to peer into your soul. It was as if you could keep no secrets from him, even in your heart. I felt very uneasy talking to him, as I regurgitated all the positive confessions that were expected. None of his leaders would get away with speaking or confessing negative in his presence. Patty and I lied and went through the motions of telling them what someone at our level should be saying. We told him and Molly how excited we were about how this was going to be our Diamond year and how very thankful we were that they were willing to take their very valuable time to teach our organization and us.

It is not clear when Zack sensed we might become a problem. We covered and masked our true emotions well enough to at least have him think we were just off track. Over the next few months, he began to circumvent us and counseled with leaders in our organization who he had previously never met with. I later learned that Zack and Kerry secretly arranged for Keith and Lisa to counsel with him. This was something they had always wanted to do. He was very shrewd. We did not understand at the time why he was suddenly showing an interest in people he had hardly known in our group.

The couples he was now meeting with were as naïve as we had been not so very long ago. We had taught them to trust him without question. He was teaching them the belief that he would look after each of them as he would his own children. Zack was a master of psychology and keen in his understanding of human nature. Only later would we understand that he was building relationships and loyalties in depth around us so, no matter what happened to us, the tool buying organization we developed would remain intact. This would allow it to continue over time to pump millions more into his secretive book and tape income. We did not even see this coming.

The deeper I got into the research, the more rotten and deceitful nearly every aspect of The Business seemed. It appeared as if the entire recruitment and training process was predicated upon fraud or outright intentional deceit. You may think I would have had a feeling of relief having discovered this; however, there was no one on earth who would want me to be wrong more than me. If this was all true, I had butchered the lives of my closest friends and families. I had been used as a dupe to rob them of the very things I had promised they would gain by getting into The Business with me. I had told them they could create incredible incomes, improve their lives, and spend more time with their families. As it turned out, nothing was further from the truth. This was not God's principle of reaping what you sowed. They had been intentionally and systematically deceived and robbed by an apparent collaboration of respected and well-known people, Diamonds, and Amway.

I did not want any of this to be true. I felt divided in two. Defying all reason, part of me **still believed** this was a good business. Maybe I was just a loser with lots of excuses. If there were some minor problems with The Business, we could resolve them. Part of me was certain Zack would eventually make all of this right. My psychological problems became great, as I battled dark shadows in this mental war of conflicting thoughts, feelings, and loyalties. I found it more and more difficult to make even the simplest of decisions. Patty had always admired my strength and decisiveness. Now, I agonized over small choices like what to eat or what time to get the mail. I was becoming more and more incapacitated.

This was all the more agonizing because, in a weird way, I was fully aware of my weakness. It might not be bad losing your mind if you were oblivious to it, but I could feel myself slipping towards insanity. The arguments constantly raged in my mind and did so without any way of stopping them. I felt as if something was taking control of me.

I began to have terrible nightmares. The first one was indicative of what I would experience for years, increasing in frequency until I had an episode *every night*. The first time it happened, I awoke from a terrifying dream, panic stricken, ripping the hair from my chest. I was hyperventilating and had a tremendous pressure in my chest. I thought I was having a heart attack — and I was only in my thirties! I felt certain I was about to die. Strangely enough, it actually was almost a relief because of the guilt I felt over those

I had recruited and what I had done to my family. I did not want Patty to watch me die and have terrible memories of my last moments. I moved quickly and quietly to our living room to lie down on the couch and accept my fate. The intensity of the chest pressure and hyperventilating subsided in about twenty minutes. I had mixed feelings — both glad and disappointed I had lived. What was going on?

We went to another seminar and a very strange thing happened. We were saying all the right things for the people around us when one of Zack's young Diamonds struck up a conversation with me. He had become, in my opinion, somewhat of a lunatic. Like me, he saw Zack as having replaced his father. He was fairly normal until he went Diamond. After going Diamond, he stopped in the middle of an open meeting and told the audience, which included prospects, he was not there to entertain them, but was going to do or say whatever the Holy Spirit directed him to say. Additionally, he was the one leader who claimed to be the most loyal to Zack. He, too, had stated he was willing to die for Zack without question.

I apparently had been identified as a potential "problem." We were talking about different topics and, out of the blue, he started telling me of his loyalty and the size of his gun collection. In the recent past, his loyalty talks had been so bizarre that he had become notorious for them. He took things to the far extreme, very much as Kerry had done in the past. What he shared with me next crossed the line. He told me he was not afraid of prison and would "take me out" if I ever messed with Zack. He advised he would do this to anyone who messed with Zack. He described in detail his gun collection of revolvers and 9mm automatics. He then told me he had three MAC 10's that would do the job for sure. That weapon is very similar to the Uzi assault submachine gun. He would later do speeches from stage that Zack made into tapes and marketed to his group. He bragged about the death threat, his willingness to die to be the most loyal to Zack, and the fact he carried a gun with a fifteen-round clip. His own wife admitted at a taped seminar that he had threatened to shoot her through the back if she ever left him. Strangely, perhaps because he was the most loyal, these "teachings" were disseminated to the group on tapes.

He patted me on the shoulder, smiled, and walked away, leaving me in a stunned silence. Had that message been sent by Zack? Had I been found out? He was not kidding, as I knew him well. He had the capacity not only to do this, but also to see it as the ultimate test of loyalty. I believed he would kill me or anyone else who happened to get in the way of The Business. It did not matter that he might get caught, since that would supply proof he was Zack's most loyal man. This was really getting scary now. I did not know how long I could stay undercover to compile more documentation. Strangely, I, too, was willing to die, but I was willing to die to protect my group and family. Were we going to have a final showdown? I still was not certain what the whole truth was.

I had sold my gun and hunting rifles to raise money to live on long ago. I went to a trusted friend and borrowed money to buy a handgun, which I began to carry, concealed, every day. I even taught my adult Sunday School class with it on me, with a round in the chamber, ready to go. I was certain that if my execution had been ordered, I would die, but I would not do so without a fight. Those people were really scaring me. The deeper the roots of evil seemed to extend, the more determined I was to expose it! (Yes, as completely bizarre and irrational as this seems, part of me felt we could still make all this right.) How did this happen? We just got in a business to develop a secondary income. Now our lives were becoming a horror movie.

Patty was not filled with a sense of peace, seeing me strap on a loaded gun every day. I carried it so the kids were not aware of it. The poor little guys still thought we were going Diamond. Part of me did, too. Somehow, a part of me felt I would be the one to resolve this and be a hero to my group and ultimately find favor with Zack for doing so. Deep down, he must be good and just got off track. This was delusional but I could not reason it out. My thought process was now so convoluted that I frequently forgot to eat for an entire day. I often finished my Internet research at 2 or 3 a.m. and collapsed, still fully dressed, on my side of the bed.

"It is certainly the opportunity of the century."^{*}

— Amway Crown Jody Victor

^{*} Jody Victor, *It's Unbelievable* audiocassette, Stock No. DBR 897

Dream Makers and Heart Breakers

*"That's what we want to talk about tonight. Because I am pleased to be able to tell you that, once again, for the thirty-eighth straight year, the Amway business opportunity is the best business opportunity in the whole world, bar none. I don't say that with arrogance, I say that simply because it is true. And we work each and every day in Ada to keep it true."**

— Dick DeVos

The seminar for thousands of Amway distributors began with the familiar pattern of loud patriotic and religious music, bright lights, music, prayer, and speakers that go on until very late at night. It is hell on earth to now clearly see and partly understand the deception. I am physically sickened to be there. I have to continue my duties, running the back-stage speaker area to not be found out. I think I am doing a fairly good job until Zack calls me over to where he is sitting. I go quickly to him and he asks me how everything is going. I tell him how great things are and make the expected positive professions about the coming year. He seems to have accepted the answers and I move back to my duties.

Understand that Zack is incredibly perceptive. It is almost uncanny, but in a crowd of thousands, he could pick out the few "problems." I feel good to have kept my heart and thoughts concealed from him. This security is soon shattered as, after about fifteen minutes, he beckons for me again. He just wanted to make certain everything was OK with Patty and me and that we were excited about the coming year. I again restate the appropriate positive confessions, with more enthusiasm. He seems to have bought it, but I am very nervous now. Sometimes it seems as if he can almost read your mind.

In about twenty minutes, he calls me to his side again and I feel myself beginning to sweat. He makes a critical mistake. He had taught us how to "reach" people using touch and emotion and by speaking softly. I have video of him teaching our leaders these techniques on his Island. He pulls me within inches of his face and puts his hand on my shoulder gently. He lowers his voice and softly tells me how much he and Molly love us and think about Patty and me. He advises that they talk about us often, love us, and know that this is our year. After our nearly ten years in business, he does not even know the names of our children. He looked me directly in the eyes as he said this. He also used nearly every technique he had taught us. He used them in a way he had taught us to work

* Dick DeVos, *Guest Speakers* Audiotape, Stock No. FED 97-9, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

specifically for my personality type. It was so obvious what he was doing. I had been off tapes for almost two months and could now think. This was evil.

To use these techniques, looking someone directly in the eye and telling them you love them just to keep problems to a minimum is pure evil. I saw pure, raw evil in his eyes. It was a darkness that scared me. The rage exploded inside me as I thought about how badly I could hurt him before his loyal security team took me down. I wanted to tear him to pieces. I trusted my family and all I loved to him. I had, for nearly a decade, looked to him as a father and sought his approval. Now he was attempting to manipulate my loyalty and emotions in a damage control effort.

I tell him how much I appreciate him and Molly and agree that this is our “Diamond year.” He knows there is a problem, but he has no idea how large it just became. He later gets on stage to a convulsive standing ovation and goes through the same God, Love, Country, and Success talks I knew by heart. It is revolting to see all the new people there becoming freshly seduced. There is a pre-dinner break and Patty and I go back to our room. As soon as we close the door to our room, I tell Patty about my encounter with Zack. This is like a terrible movie we are trapped in, playing roles we would have never chosen. We change into our tuxedo and gown and go to a brief reception with Zack, Molly, the speakers, Diamonds, and other Emeralds. After about fifteen minutes, we are brought to a staging area for the Emerald and Diamond procession.

This was typically an emotional highlight of the day for most distributors. A path is made near the center of the dinner tables of the crowd of thousands present. The music starts and a blinding spotlight flashes our way. Each Emerald and Diamond couple is announced, one at a time, and walks through the wildly cheering crowd to the sound tracks of triumphant themes like Rocky. It is our turn, for the last time ever, to walk the procession. I am sickened to be there. Ten percent of the whole group there are from our organization and are our family. We love these people with all that we are. Our hearts pound as the announcer’s booming voice calls us by name, and the crowd cheers. We walk into the bright light and flash pictures go off as we move toward the front to our reserved table. People are reaching out and touching us and giving us high fives. We used to be so proud that God was using us to give people hope. We cannot do this much longer. It is killing us.

We make small talk with the other Emeralds and just try to get through the meal. My mind is racing. I am so angry and hurt at the same time. There is no one on earth who would like to have discovered all this less than me. I had wanted so much to be wrong. Zack and Molly are right by us at the next table. At the end of the meal, a distributor brings a new couple up to meet Zack and Molly. The young couple is polite and very excited. Zack works them well... long, firm handshake, encouraging smile, compliments, good eye contact, warm conversation, edification of the upline, and talk of the business never being better. He’s got them. They were Patty and me almost ten years ago. This cannot be allowed to go on. The young couple is on cloud nine, but would be trembling with fear if they had any idea of the destruction that may slowly overtake nearly every aspect of their life, finances, and marriage. The happy sheep walk, thankfully, further into the pen, not seeing the bloody axe behind the bible in the smiling butcher’s hand.

Patty and I are now nearly paralyzed by what we clearly see going on around us. We’re off tapes and the psychological fog is lifting to a certain extent. The night session

seems to go on for days, as the sweet poison is spread to the hungry flock. My mind is racing and my heartbeat increases until I can hardly catch my breath. I have to stay cool and do my duty back stage to not blow my cover. I avoid Zack and make it through the night without further contact. It is past midnight when the group is dismissed. They are exhausted, but motivated. We go to our room and change quickly into more casual clothes for the late night-early morning training session with Zack, Molly, and the visiting Amway Diamond speakers. We arrive with a group of Emeralds and Diamonds and fade to the back of the room.

As I was someone who handled the speakers from the time they landed at the airport until they hit the stage, I know that Zack often gives them specific topics to cover. He is incredibly detail oriented and, at times, would even tell the speaker what analogies to use to make a point. Given this, I know the Diamond he has in to speak to us has probably been coached, as nothing happens by accident with Zack. Zack builds up the visiting Diamond and admonishes all of us to take notes. The Diamond starts talking and tells us how much respect he has for Zack and Molly. They were his inspiration years ago and we need to know how fortunate we are... God Bless America.... ad nauseum....*blah blah blah...*

He ran through the typical mutual-admiration-society points, then, out of the blue, launched into the topic of total loyalty. He said the people who made the most money in his group are the ones who question **nothing**. The distributors who question upline always seem to have a problem that holds them back. Perfect loyalty breeds perfect duplication. The leaders are all taking notes zealously, as Zack can see everyone in this small room. Zack leans back in his chair, arms behind his head, and smiles in knowing agreement. This is scary. The one who questions **nothing** makes the most? Is Jim Jones going to come in here and serve us all a refreshing fruit-aid drink soon? As the topic progressed, the zombies we were surrounded by took more and more notes.

I was shocked so many bright, articulate people in the room accepted total and complete submission to the upline. They were very sharp people! It took extraordinary effort and skill to motivate them to the Emerald or Diamond level. None of them saw a problem. It just did not make sense to me. The people who succeeded the most were the ones who questioned *nothing*? What happened to the work ethic? I was brought into this business because it was based upon serving others and getting paid for your effort. Now, it seemed as if service to others in the group and the incredible amount of time put into The Business was not as relevant as the fact of becoming a mindless, unquestioning drone. Of course, this exposure was only to a small group of Emeralds and Diamonds. None of the thousands of participants at the Dream Weekend seminar were even vaguely aware of what was expected of their leaders. The poison was sold to them in small, carefully packaged, bite-size chunks.

We had to be up early the next morning dressed formally for the Sunday worship service. It was a Christian, non-denominational service, and all distributors were strongly encouraged to attend each of these major seminars. Many had accepted the Lord or recommitted their lives to Him at these services, as I had. We had seen quite a few people in our group, even whole families, commit their lives and business to God. The worship service became very emotional, moving many to tears. The lack of sleep had a lot to do with this response, but the message that morning was still a powerful and moving one.

Attending the services in the past had always helped convince me I was doing

something worthy with my life. Now, the sight sickened me. I could see that a personal relationship with God was used by slick leaders in what looked like a well-scripted marketing tool. It seemed the name of Jesus was spoken freely to bring credibility to something that had none. It also appeared that Christians were targeted for economic harvest with this superficial praise of God. I watched helplessly as the emotional and psychological anchors of deceit were being set within these people. When they thought about The Business, many felt a connection with God and commitment to family. Which of them would ever turn their back on God or their family and leave “their” business? As I looked out over the crowd and spotted many of my dearest friends, I was overcome with grief. *What had I done to these good people?* They kept thanking me for giving them a chance. We had all been just like sheep. The butcher’s knife was so sharp that none of us ever felt the cut. We all just plodded onward and were bled dry! I was torn inside, because I really wanted to gather more documentation, but I could not force myself to stay a minute longer.

As I watched those trusting people being led to destruction, I broke down. I decided to leave four hours before the seminar ended on Sunday. I made up an excuse about visiting one of our distributors who was in a hospital from one of the car accidents and left Keith to fill in for my duties back stage. Being there and knowing what was really going on was like being in hell itself. Patty and I packed our clothes and literally ran to our car. We still were unable to communicate much. This isn’t too surprising. We had worked hard for nearly ten years to eradicate all negative thought and speech. We knew something was terribly wrong, but were programmed not to verbalize our concern. The worst part was that we sensed an evil beyond description. Nearly everyone we loved was involved directly because of us. They were family. Our children knew them better than their own flesh-and-blood relatives. We were traumatized beyond description and unable to reason.

A new twist was now put on the Amway business. We had all been warned never to go on the Internet, because it was a breeding ground for rumors and negative, unfounded information. It had no practical use for someone going Diamond and served no business purpose, we were told. Having been warned of this for years, we were then introduced to Quixtar, a completely “new” company being launched *on* the “net.” It sounded just like Amway, but as an online, Internet version. We were informed that Amway was building a new business with IBM and Microsoft as partners. Distributors were told Bill Gates was really excited when he saw The Business model and had to be part of it.

Details of this new venture unfolded slowly. We were advised that the Quixtar Company was a Delaware Corporation and that it was separate and distinct from the Amway Corporation. It sounded as if the stock was held privately by the DeVos and Van Andel family members. The new business model was high tech and would bring in even more sophisticated professionals. Instead of dancing around the dreaded “A” word, distributors would be able to truthfully say, “Honest, it’s not Amway.” The Quixtar company was to have the same marketing and compensation plan as the Amway corporation. It sounded as if the only difference would be in name and that distributors would be able to order their products online. I found this to be ironic, as I had been admonished for wasting time online as I watched the web develop. This had potential, but it looked like the same exact deal with a PC and a new name.

We had seen Amway disguised as Home Shopping Delivered, Network Marketing, Networking, New Business Development, Walters International, Yager Enterprises, and many others. This just seemed like the misdirection du jour, despite the Quixtar hype.

Life with Papa

The nights worsened as the stress levels elevated. In every one of my nightmares, either Patty, the kids, or I ended up dying an agonizing death in one no-way-out scenario after another. I woke up again and again hyperventilating and clutching my chest. I was often fearful I was going to have a heart attack from the 24-hour-a-day stress. I attempted not to sleep, believing I could learn to live without rest. I made it almost three days and then collapsed fully dressed in a heap on my bed. I was losing weight, eating only sporadically. I thought back to the conversation I had had with the Amway Diamond (the one with the MAC 10 submachine guns). I was fearful I would be killed if anyone found out, but I could not stop documenting the evidence of our betrayal. I strapped on a loaded gun every day. I wore it so much I would often forget I had it on. I attended our local church and Sunday School with it concealed. It became like clothing to me. I was a living contradiction, teaching in Sunday School about faith and trust in God, but having a loaded 9mm handgun strapped to me at all times. I was a complete fraud. I had lost everything, including my faith.

I was panic stricken almost constantly without knowing why. I felt as if I were no longer in control of my mind, thoughts, emotions, or actions. Having been an up-lifter and motivator for years, I was shocked at the darkness of what appeared to be my own thoughts. It was as if I were a machine that had been mis-wired, because I knew I was not responding appropriately. I had never been an angry person, but I developed a rage that burned constantly just beneath the surface. I felt like a walking time bomb.

If the kids made too much noise at dinner, I verbally lashed out at them with no warning. I did not even know the anger was coming until it was there. The children were repeatedly reduced to tears, and Patty watched me sadly as I became a monster in our home. As soon as I reacted, I knew it was wrong and felt terrible, but I could not stop or control the anger. I normally left the room and cried quietly, as I wondered how to kill the beast inside of me. There was something evil in me. It was part of me. How would I kill the monster that lived inside of me when I *was* the monster? At times, I was completely numb, but when I was not numb, rage was the only feeling I experienced. I did not know who or what I was becoming. I did not know if the thoughts I had were my own or the result of thousands of hours of tapes and seminars. Who was in charge here?

I was so fearful of the night demons that overtook me while I slept that I decided to buy some rum to numb the night terrors. I drank it one night with Coca-Cola so the caffeine would keep me awake as long as possible. When I found myself hiding the bottle, I realized it was a problem. I knew intellectually that I was showing the same addictive behaviors as other people with drinking problems. I confided in a good friend and mentor in our church. I told him what I had just done and said I would give the almost full bottle of rum to someone else, just to get it out of the house. Instead, he

recommended that I dump it down the sink immediately. I did exactly that, and it felt good. I still had no idea how to beat the terror of the night. I could not bear to witness another scenario in my nightmares where Patty or the kids were hurt or killed again!

I felt as if I was in the backseat of a driverless car, careening down the road at 90 miles an hour towards a concrete wall. I could not reach the steering wheel or the brake. I felt completely overcome with an irrational feeling of complete terror and was never rescued from it by a crash and the sweet release of death itself. I was unable to tell Patty just how desperate I was, as she had always looked to me for strength. How could I tell the one who was counting on me that I was praying for death? Little did I know, it was very obvious to her I was becoming a complete basket case. (We were not able to even speak of those times for over a year.). Sometimes the pressure was too great and I took a beer and a cigar down to the swimming hole on our property. Here I sat for hours with a loaded gun, a can of mace, a beer, and a cigar. ***I don't even smoke.*** I would stare into the flowing water while frenzied thoughts screamed through my mind. I felt like I was drowning in the blood of the people who I loved the most. Patty never knew if I would return alive from these walks.

These times of growing incapacitation were in stark contrast to the intense concentration I could summon at other times. You see, I continued to attend multiple open meetings, training sessions, and seminars in order to document a well-orchestrated pattern of fraudulent conduct. I believed that when I exposed everything, both Amway and Zack would attempt to explain what happened to us and members of our global organization as an isolated incident. That was far from the truth. I collected massive documentation which was going to enable me to prove my rising suspicions. The documentation I uncovered was revealing there had been widespread, systematic misrepresentation involved in recruiting and training Amway distributors for over twenty years. Those responsible were wealthy, powerful, and shrewd — I would be crushed like an insect without complete documentation.

Second Verse? Same as the First!

By March, I still felt I needed more documentation. The pressure was escalating. I broke into tears, even in public, for no apparent reason. I would see a sad commercial on TV and start to cry. Being around our distributors and meticulously documenting what I knew to be true was hell itself. It was agonizing to repeat false positive professions and motivational slogans to them. All of our Directs were expected to spend a small fortune to go to Arizona to another “Go Diamond” seminar and listen to Dexter drone on about nothing. I could not, in good conscience, let this happen. My hand had been forced. Dreading the moment, I could not put the inevitable off any longer. I wrote a fifteen-page letter, complete with documentation, to send to all our leaders.

This was agonizing, as it was like throwing acid on our friends and family. Please understand that I was the one who had taught them to trust Zack in all situations. I helped them internalize that set of beliefs. I had helped teach them there was no other way to be happy, succeed, or fulfill God's purpose in their lives other than through Amway. I had told some of their children how incredible it was going to be to go to Disneyland and see

Hawaii when Mom and Dad went Diamond. They had watched me “retire” when I was thirty. That was one of many events that had encouraged them to dump thousands of dollars into the system year after year. I had helped sell them on being tough! I had encouraged them to take massive time away from their families for the short term in order to establish a lifetime of style forever. It was a complete hoax and, now in shame, I had to tell them what I had learned.

I prepared a packet nearly a quarter inch thick with court cases, video and audio tape transcripts, and revelations of what happened behind closed doors at leadership meetings and in high-level counseling sessions. I revealed to our leaders the fraud of the tool income and the income/lifestyle representations made by the Diamonds. A partial transcript of a taped, private counseling session with Zack was included. On the tape, he taught me, as a new up-and-coming leader, to cut off people who did not buy into the tool system. At the time, I believed *the system* was essential to success and, in fact, had a 100% success rate — as “documented” by the opulent lifestyles of the Diamonds. None of us had any idea it was an income source for Zack. As a matter of fact, we were led to believe that, on occasion, he even lost money on some events, but invested for our sakes.

The stress reached a near-eruption point, and I confided in a few close distributor friends what I had discovered. They were sickened by what they learned, but also felt compassion for us and for the position we were in. We were approaching a Saturday that was our monthly seminar day in our city. There was no possible way we could attend. We were terrified at the thought of coming “out of the closet.” Our absence would be reported within minutes to Zack. We were destitute and being eaten alive by the stress. Don,* an anesthesiologist in our organization, agreed to mail the many packages out for us and paid for us to spend the weekend in Washington, D.C. at Embassy Suites. We needed to remove ourselves from this boiling cauldron. The Arizona trip was coming up soon and the exposure had to happen quickly. My hand had been forced. The truth of the matter was that I was still unable to make the decision to quit The Business. After the thousands of tapes I had listened to, it was almost impossible for me to believe there could be life outside of Amway.

I had confided in Don about the intense, psychological problems I was experiencing as well as the nightmares. It was very difficult for me, but I needed some relief or help to keep going. He prescribed Valium for me. They were *real* knockout pills, and I was grateful to be able to knock myself out for three or four hours on occasion. I had never taken any medication of this type in my life and felt emotionally weak to have to resort to medicine. Survival was more important than my pride and right then I needed to survive. I used them sparingly, according to the directions, and only as a last resort.

We left town. With the exceptions of Patty’s Caesarian section and a wedding, we had never missed a single monthly seminar, leadership, training session, or open meeting in nearly ten years. We felt incredibly guilty, as our people were there. We drove to D.C. and checked into the hotel. Patty and I were far from relaxed, but this was a welcome break from what we had been experiencing. The kids jumped and romped in the pool and hot tub. At least, they were having fun.

Patty and I agonized over the reaction the group would have. The first call came on Sunday. A distributor named Chip** called and I could tell that he was very upset. He

* Not his real name

** Not his real name

wanted to know if I was okay because something terrible had to have happened for us to miss a seminar. He told me that I could just hang up on him if the question was inappropriate. He knew questioning the upline about anything was forbidden. My mind raced as I agonized over what or how much to tell him. I asked him to come over to my house the next day, but to tell no one. He and his wife were new distributors and had become good friends.

Patty agonized over the orders that night. All of our people called in their orders, and a concerned couple asked where we had been. We had a prepared story for them to hold them over until they got the package on Monday. No one really questioned us, of course, because we were upline.

Chip showed up the next day and looked ashen. He knew I didn't miss anything in The Business for any reason. I gently slid the packet we had sent to our leaders across the table to him. He was a large, powerful man, but tears welled up in his eyes as he read the letter. He, too, was betting his family's future on this business. He and his wife, like most active distributors in our group, had lost thousands of dollars.

He was too shocked to speak for quite some time. Being positive, I told him I hoped Zack would fix it all and we would get right back on track. He was not convinced, but he had not been in the system that long either. I told him not to make any decisions until all the leaders had received the information and we had a meeting with Zack. He told Patty and me that he loved us and left in tears. He was obviously being torn apart by the same forces that were within me.

The phone began to ring off the hook, as our bewildered friends got their mail. For the next few days, the phone would ring the second we hung up from the previous caller. It was a cordless phone, and as soon as one battery would die, we would replace it with a newly charged one. We were on the phone nearly 10 hours straight each day. We began to set up face-to-face meetings with each caller at our house. One by one, they came over and we answered all their questions. We told them, to their shock, that we had made only somewhere near \$30,000 or less as Emeralds. They, too, had been told Emeralds make over \$100,000. Some were in such a state of disbelief that I had to show them all my tax returns. We discussed the fact that many of them were working day and night for years and were making a pittance for it. One Silver Direct shared that he had shown a tax loss for his Amway business of \$25,000 in only two years. He certainly believed what he was learning from our meeting.

Most were shocked and stunned more than angry. They all agreed with most of what we revealed to them, but still looked generally confused. I knew the Directs Kerry had recruited as his spies had faxed or hand delivered the packet directly to Kerry just as soon as they received it. Kerry, of course, would have immediately sent it on to Zack. Zack and Molly happened to be with Dexter in the Bahamas at the Atlantis Hotel, enjoying one of the Amway lifestyle trips. They both had been sending out voice mails saying how great it was and that they loved us, we could do it, etc..... I was so used to the routine now, I knew exactly what Zack would say when he called.

As if on cue, he called and was very friendly and spoke kindly to me. He said he had heard I may have some concerns, and he was open to talking about anything. His focus was to help Patty and me go Diamond because he truly cared. I did not buy it! It felt as though I was talking to a venomous serpent.

He acted as if he had not gotten the fax yet, but I felt certain Kerry had forwarded

it to him immediately. He kept trying to pry a conversation out of me, but I knew better than to let him get a toehold! I hung up on him. He called right back and spoke very kindly. I recognized his damage control movements immediately. This guy hadn't wanted to listen to or help me for almost ten years and now that I may have exposed him for having spent the last 20 years defrauding honest people, he suddenly was my best friend. It was late at night and we had yet another group of confused distributors in our kitchen witnessing the call. He tried to force me into a conversation, but I told him I was not willing to talk about anything until he had received the fax and read it. I told him I had all the documentation I needed on him. He told me he loved Patty and me and began to go on about how much he truly cared for us. I had had it. I have to admit that I did not act professionally and I lost my temper. I cut him short and screamed into the phone that he was a "lying sack of shit" before hanging up on him again.

The distributors in our kitchen stared in a stunned silence. I had been their cool, calm leader who could solve any problem in a positive way. I was the guy who had convinced them Zack was a godly servant, and now they heard me screaming obscenities at him. They were bewildered by what they were witnessing. The truth was beginning to look pretty ugly. But, like me, they wanted reality to be totally different.

This was the beginning of hell week for us. I knew the game plan and had seen how distributors had been "erased" when they left The Business. I thought I knew exactly what Zack's plan would be. In the letter to our leaders, I advised them of Diamonds like Brig and Lita Hart who had been virtually erased from existence when the new *Profiles of Success* came out, omitting their picture and story. They and other Diamonds had been removed from the book. The long-term distributors had already been psychologically conditioned not to think about or even notice things like that. New distributors would never know the difference, as no one would speak negative to them. In the letter to our leaders, I told them about the meetings that were definitely being planned to turn them around and erase Patty and me. I even told them that members of their upline would treat them very kindly. I knew they would swoop in and act like their new best friends, feigning great concern for their futures. *What I did not gauge correctly was the level of control upline still retained over my people's minds.*

Everything's Fine in America...

Kerry and Zack followed the playbook exactly as predicted. They arranged to have Zack do a conference call at Kerry's house for some of our Directs and another call at Emeralds Rick and Paula's for another group of leaders. I was not overly concerned; I had told my leaders exactly what to expect and they were not stupid people.

Kerry and Chris began meeting with all our leaders at regular intervals at their home. I was certain it was at Zack's direction, since Kerry did not even blow his nose without Zack's permission. Zack continued to call me from the Bahamas to try to turn me around as well. He now was realizing he no longer was dealing with a mind-numbed, fearful underling he could bully. He finally told me he would give me anything I wanted: my own training sessions, someone other than Kerry hosting the seminars, etc. I was growing more distrustful as the conversation progressed. The things he was promising

were what I thought I had wanted. He said I did not even have to work with him and could tie into another organization for support. I recognized the trap.

He knew that we, as instructed, had promoted him as a near all-knowing leader, a backbone in the organization, and to go somewhere else would confuse and destroy the group. He sounded like he wanted to help, but I sensed he still had no sincere interest in doing the right thing. He was very shrewd, but his motive seemed only to be saving his own hide. I also sensed he had confused a few of my leaders enough to turn them against me out of fear. I decided to test this. I agreed that Patty and I would meet with Zack at his home on Friday, upon his return from the Bahamas. This was done to get him to stop calling me. I needed to buy some time to think clearly, as he was good at what he did: confusing and manipulating people.

Rick, the Emerald in our organization, called us the next morning to see where we stood on everything, and I let him know we were meeting with Zack on Friday. He told me he felt we could work with this. We spoke of Zack and our mutual mistrust of him. He said that, in the Bible, Daniel suffered under an evil ruler named Nebuchadnezzar and still helped thousands. He felt we could do that, too. I could not submit my family or my friends to the rule of an evil leader, even for a test of some kind. But I did not tell him this because I did not know if I could still trust him. He was asking too many probing questions that sounded like questions Zack would have asked. I decided to test him. I told him all Zack had to say to resolve this was that he misread the situation all these years and was sorry for not taking care of it. He just needed to acknowledge what the four of us had been telling him for years. My phone rang early the next morning. It was Zack. The first thing he said was, "I am sorry for totally misreading the situation for all these years."

I realized Rick had sold out, reporting on me to Zack, while Zack would do or say anything to put the fire out. I said the right things to Zack only to appease him and let him believe we were still on board for the Friday meeting.

You must understand that, in my heart of hearts, I truly wanted to have the meeting. I wanted to witness a miracle and learn he was honest and that all this had been a big mistake, and he could make it right. The little voice which had once been a whisper in my soul was now audible after months of not listening to any of the tapes.

Over the phone, Zack acknowledged the problems and said he would fix everything, but I was still very uncomfortable. I did not trust him or my own ability to think things through yet. My head was spinning. He was kind and very amicable, not argumentative or combative about anything. I just wanted this to be a good, honest business. He told me he loved us again. I decided to test him. Before he hung up, I asked him the names of our children. After nine years, he should have known their names. He had no idea what their names were. He apologized and said he didn't ever remember me mentioning them by name.

With all that, I dropped my guard. As incredible as it sounds, he managed to convince me that I could make Diamond in no time through Quixtar, and soon I would have no financial worries. He convinced me that we could be EDC (Executive Diamond) in two years and make a huge fortune and help many people. This, he advised was "better than the alternative." I did not tell Patty much of this, but agreed to go to the Friday meeting at Zack's mansion. He got me back "in." Despite moments of clarity, my mind could not understand the truth or yet reason clearly.

Every one of our leaders was calling almost daily to find out what was going to

happen. We finally got the phone to slow down a little once we told them of the Friday meeting. Many kept coming over to see us in person after meeting with Kerry and Chris. Then, a very strange phenomenon began to occur. The more we told them and the more documentation we provided, the more confused they became. The brainwashed glaze and perpetual 1,000-tape smile was gone. They had been replaced by tired looks of complete anxiety and fear. We could tell most of them had no idea what the truth was by that point. I could not understand what was happening! I had to figure it all out on my own. I had not had the luxury of having someone else doing all this research for me, trying to protect me. No one simply gave me over 50 pages of documentation to save my future. After meeting at Kerry and Chris's house, some of our closest friends began to grill us with really personal questions. We did not understand what was happening. Some asked strange questions and were evasive about why they were asking. Some became strangely silent when we asked them about the meetings with Kerry and Chris. We had nothing to hide because we were telling the truth, but their embarrassed looks seemed to imply another kind of shame.

In the meantime, Patty and I dropped in on Don and his wife to thank them for sending us to D.C. I told him about our meeting scheduled for Friday and that we were resolving all the challenges. I explained to them that Quixtar was a whole new business and might not have the same emphasis on the tools. Don was normally a very calm, quiet man, but when I told him about Quixtar, he went ballistic on me right there in his living room. He started jumping up and down, pounding his fists on his legs and yelling that these were the same people who had been lying to us and screwing us for years. He kept yelling, **"It's the same people!!!!"** again and again. His face was beet-red from yelling so loudly. We left quickly, surprised at how negative he had become. (Obviously, my capacity to break free of the system-induced psychological coma was still impaired.)

I got home from this scream-fest and checked my voice mail. As was normal, I had turned on my tape recorder and began to play and tape my messages. For a moment, I was actually relieved to hear there was a message from Zack, but my life changed forever as he spoke. He told me he did not want to take part in any meeting with any **"witnesses"** or anything I would want to put together. No witnesses? Was this the Mafia, or what? It was over. In my heart, I now felt certain my former hero, mentor, and father figure was not a man of honor and integrity. With everything that was in me, I had wanted to be wrong. I had wanted to fix this for my friends. We had all believed The Business was our future. We were going to succeed and impact the world in a positive way. Now, it was over. I felt deep regret for all of us. We had been an incredible team. Grief is the only word I can use, and even that just barely touches the emotion that wrapped its icy fingers around my heart. The truth was now clear.

The last few months had been some of the most profitable we ever had in terms of monthly gross income. Quixtar seemed to have some real potential, particularly with alleged "partners" like Microsoft and IBM. Zack had been verbally agreeing to give us the freedom to build our business; yet, I knew I was figuratively "a dead man walking" for challenging him. I did not trust him at all. I could not submit myself or my family or my friends to a corrupt leadership. My only choice was to walk out and let go of our dreams. I knew that our exodus would destroy what Patty and I had spent years to build.

We soon would have to declare bankruptcy. Out of moral obligation, I was about to destroy my only income source by exposing the Amway fraud. The costs would be

high, but there were too many good people looking to us for leadership for us to think of ourselves. I knew our organization would hear lies about Patty and me, about why we left The Business. For years, our phone had rung almost non-stop with a flurry of activity from our friends in The Business. Soon, though, our phone grew strangely silent. It would never again ring non-stop with news from our group.

They were family and we had been in constant communication with them. The silence, at first, was a welcome relief from the frenzy of calls we had experienced during the previous week. We had a few sporadic meetings with some of our leaders. Those meetings were strained and very uncomfortable. They tried to convince us The Business wasn't all bad. There were *some* good things about it. They began to argue with me as if I were a negative prospect and they had just shown me the plan. I brought up the fact that they were making little or nothing after years of work and after dumping tens of thousands of dollars into their business. It appeared the entire recruitment and training process was based upon complete misrepresentations of the truth. They robotically explained the principles of business ownership and investing. I recognized that thought process, because I had taught it to them.

They did not believe much of what I had been telling them about our situation. In fact, they had been led to believe that Patty and I just screwed up. Emeralds all made a lot of money, they told me. I showed them the tax returns again. They were blocking the information out, being unable to process it. I could not get them even to look at their own tax returns. The one distributor who told me he had lost \$25,000 during the past two years had business savvy and managed some large businesses in our city. But, he turned all the information around and explained to me that this loss had actually helped him, because he got somewhere near \$6,000 in tax refunds, helping him to pay his debt down.

What insanity! He was a sharp businessman, yet he was in such a zombie-like state he was rationalizing the benefit of taking huge amounts of time away from his family and losing \$25,000. His wife had confided in us the prior week that she had come home and found their son curled up in the fetal position, crying hysterically, because he had no friends. They had been so busy going non-stop building their Amway business that they had no time to take the kids anywhere to do things with their friends. She was overcome with grief and guilt for having abandoned them. That was last week, though. This week they were trying to sell ME on how wonderful life really was for them. I did not understand what was happening.

We still communicated with most of our leaders. Zack had been calling me to the point where we felt we were being harassed. I asked him to stop all direct communication with me and to run it through my local attorney. He still called twice in one night and would not identify himself to Patty. We recorded the numbers from our caller ID for documentation. He called back a third time and was talking in a friendly manner, as though we were buddies. As was now usual, we had a distributor couple at our home who witnessed this. It was pathetic. I advised him I would file harassment charges if he ever called again. He had let me know in a previous conversation that he sent a copy of my letter to his attorney. He was bluffing me. I had anticipated Zack would react like that with bullying tactics. I told him I was not intimidated by this saber rattling.

I knew he was not going to sue me for defamation of character or anything else. I knew he did not want to have *any* of this information going public. He would never jeopardize this rotten truth about The Business by having it become common knowledge.

I told him I was no longer fearful of him and to feel free to have his attorney file suit against us. He said he had no intention of doing that and wasn't actually threatening, but just wanted to inform us of his actions. He had sorely underestimated me if he thought I was about to go away quietly after what he had done to us and to thousands of other innocent people.

I heard less and less from our leaders in the next few days, just that Kerry, Chris, and Larry were having a meeting with them at a local Quality Inn. I also heard Zack had agreed to let Rick and Paula order and pick up directly from his office, so they would not have to deal with Kerry and Chris. Everyone was still strangely unsure as to what they were going to do. Confusion was rampant. I was certain about 95% of them would just quit. It was a sorry thing, but somehow we would all rebuild our lives. Some distributors came over and we talked about all our hopes and dreams being gone. I explained how, finally, these dreams could truly become possible. Now that we were out of Amway and were not being bled to death financially, we would have the time and resources to truly live our dreams and be with our families. Logically, I knew it was completely true. But, in my heart and spirit, I did not believe any of it myself. It felt as if our lives were over. There seemed to be no hope.

We continued meeting with our friends, who seemed to be more and more mixed up by what they were hearing and learning. At times, they almost sounded like robots as they regurgitated the positive aspects of The Business. After about a week, I noticed one particular pattern. Three of our Direct Distributors shared that The Business *was* good, because they had retired their wives with it. They stated this with complete sincerity.

Look at each case. The first was the Ruby Direct, who was working nearly seven days a week now and had been in The Business nine years. He was making, by his own admission, around \$4,000 a year and rarely saw his children. His wife had worked for the school district, where she had a solid job with benefits. The second was the Silver Direct, who just the previous week had shown me a loss of \$25,000 in the last twenty-four months. His wife had been a teacher. The third was John, a Profit Sharing Direct, who worked at a concrete plant and had talked about having to go to his bank because he was tens of thousands in debt. His Amway business was probably showing a huge annual loss.

"The story of Amway is one of the greatest success stories of all time. In less than forty years, a small company in from Ada, Michigan — with one product and a handful of salespeople — has perfected and fine-tuned referral based marketing and built one of the most successful business enterprises in the history of commerce. Their network of Independent Business Owners encompasses three million people in eighty different countries and territories"*

— Coy Barefoot

* Barefoot, Coy. *The Quixtar Revolution*, Copyright 1999, p. 141

The Turning Tide

*"And all we have ever had in the business is our Amway income. We still do not have tool income. That might come as a surprise to some of you. But that's all we have is Amway income. But do you know why we have a big Amway income? It's because we took some of the principles from the Bible and we lived by them."**

— Amway Crown Ambassador Birdie Yager

We were home when the phone rang and I was pleased to hear Bob Leatherman from Distributor Relations at Amway. He had always been pleasant with me. He explained he had a gentleman named Dan Bailey on the line. His department was not revealed to me, but I assumed Dan was from Amway's legal department and knew instinctively he had been sent a copy of the packet. There was a certain relief in having them call, as I wanted to fill them in on the whole situation. I still wanted to believe Amway was a good, honorable business that had been prostituted by people like Dexter Yager and Zack Walters. The founders were Christian billionaires. I felt sure they would be disgusted to learn what had happened to us, our group, and the entire Yager/Walters organizations globally.

Dan and Bob seemed very professional and friendly. Initially, it was reassuring to speak with them. However, we hadn't been on the phone long before they made a tactical error. ***They lied to me!*** They said they had heard I had some concerns about the business, and they wanted to know why I would stop building the business after having achieved the Emerald level. I knew they had the letter in their hands. I had just mailed a copy of it directly to Bob Leatherman, but that copy couldn't have reached him yet. Zack or Kerry had to have faxed them a copy. I told them they could expect a relatively thick packet of documentation from me shortly. They continued to prod me for information and tried to express some "genuine concern" and wanted to help resolve any challenges we had with The Business. They claimed to have no idea what the issues were and just wanted to get them out on the table.

They pushed and probed me for information three or four times, which was too much like dealing with Zack. They appeared to be friendly and helpful and full of concern, yet they were lying to me. I knew information this damning must have been forwarded to them immediately. I made it clear I wanted no conversation with them regarding my exodus from The Business until they had received and read my letter and supporting documentation. Finally, Dan admitted that he was looking at my letter. I

* Birdie Yager, *Birdie-Monday Afternoon* audiotape, Stock No. GDL 96-28, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

immediately cut him off and asked if he was in another building on a conference call or in the same room with Bob. They admitted they were in the same room, and I was infuriated. It was beyond comprehension to assume they had not read and discussed the revelations of my letter and the enclosed documentation at great length. Here was the same kind of deception that Zack had practiced on us.

I flew into a rage. I could not believe they were pulling the same deceitful crap on me again. Bob acknowledged he had read the letter and explained that they just wanted to give me the opportunity to state it in my own words. "I thought the letter was written in my own words, wasn't it?" Then, they started the good cop/bad cop routine. Bob remained very friendly, and Dan stated that he was actually from the Rules and Business Conduct department and that I had violated several rules by sending this letter into our organization. Wait a minute, it was against the Code of Conduct to advise people they were being defrauded? We played good cop/bad cop for a while and I was amazed at how pathetic it was all becoming. They were using the same playbook that Zack liked to use. They appeared very kind and concerned, but were trying to steer my decisions. We closed the conversation on a friendly note, but I was mentally and emotionally exhausted. It seemed my hope of integrity at some level of The Business was wearing very thin.

The night came when Kerry and Chris were to have the meeting with all our leaders to erase us and explain away the letter. I had a Direct in attendance who took notes at the meeting for me. Kerry and Chris and their sponsor, Larry, ran the meeting. Larry was Chris's brother, the one who had shared how "everyone in our area carried a gun" after I complained about Kerry brandishing a gun. The meeting was completely out of character.

Zack had always prided himself in **personally** solving challenges very quickly. He had taught us as leaders to put out a fire if we even saw a little smoke. He solved problems, particularly big ones, himself. Now he was sending those two? Perhaps he had wanted to distance himself from the liability and was sending them to slander us, so he could later say he was unaware of it. He had been calling Kerry, Keith, and Rick directly for the last couple of weeks.

Larry and his wife had been in Amway for around twelve years and were Direct Distributors. They might have had a net income of around \$5,000 a year, maybe less, after over a decade of solid effort. Incredibly, Larry started the meeting by saying that no one knew why I had sent the letter. He said that stressed-out people do wild, irrational things and that I was a poor money manager. I had expected this and was not shocked by it. He went through the standard "we love you and care for your best interest" type of propaganda and spoke of how honorable Kerry, Chris, Zack, and Molly were. Larry was one of the people I had on tape, from years ago, telling us we would make \$100,000 a year as Emeralds. Now after we had quit our jobs, gone Emerald, and were destitute, we were bad money managers? There was a noticeable difference between the promised \$100,000 and the under \$30,000 income we were actually making. Also, after over a decade in The Business, he had never come close to doing as "well" as we had done; yet he was saying we screwed up. He was an airline pilot and had a nice home and car, and the group may have believed it came from his Amway "success." They were all making nearly nothing in comparison to what they were promised, yet they all thought they were the only ones who were not making what they expected. That's not so amazing, when you consider the effects of never being allowed to share negative comments or question the

upline. People had no clue.

Distributors were advised at the meeting that it was dangerous to allow Patty and me to have any contact with their organization. That was incredible, considering the fact we had been lifted up as heroes on stage for years. Now we were a dangerous threat. Those present were advised to send us cease and desist orders, stating they would take legal action if we had any contact with them or anyone in their group. We had built these groups with them. They were our friends. They were family. This was insanity. Distributors were told the information I sent out was full of lies. They were told I was not a team player and just had it in for Kerry and Chris. That was never the issue! The Business was (and still is) built on intentional misrepresentations that have cost all of us dearly.

Rick and Paula, though Emeralds, had been treated badly by Kerry and Chris, to the point where they had almost decided to quit. Rick had refused to work with them and now dealt with Zack directly to avoid any contact. He was asked to speak at the end of the meeting. He got up and told the group that he had no problem with Kerry and Chris and had not yet had the “privilege” of working with them directly. Rick had been worked over by a master deceiver. In his response, I saw Zack’s artful work at its best.

John was a Direct in our organization who was a very close friend of mine. We shared much more than the same name. I was told later that John had been asked to call Rick prior to the meeting to see if he was staying in The Business. John called him for Kerry because the two were not even on speaking terms. He told Rick that when God was going to doing something good for His people, like Quixtar, Satan would use even a good couple (Patty and me) to destroy it. They all needed to pray for or against us. That was pure Yager/Walters system, pseudo-Christian psychobabble. All who were for the business were good and of God and all who were against came from the very bowels of hell. Now, I was one of Satan’s handmaidens? I think not. That one was so ludicrous that it did not initially bother us much. What was happening in the private meetings at Kerry and Chris’s house and with Rick and Paula was far worse. We began to hear bits and pieces as our leaders were very confused and did not know who to trust. Those bits and pieces would be the worst things we had heard thus far.

The Pain of It All

June, one of our Directs who was a very good friend, called to take Patty out to lunch. It was a nice break for Patty to get out for awhile with another woman just to relax a little. I felt relieved they were spending some time together. Patty was gone for a couple of hours. When she came back, I went to the door to greet her and hear some good news for a change. She looked sick. I asked her if she had enjoyed herself, but she said nothing. She could not speak a single word. Instead, she walked into our bedroom and collapsed on the floor. She wept uncontrollably and I was not able to console her. Leaning up against the bed, I just held her until she could speak. She kept saying, “You won’t believe what they are saying about us!” I sat there quietly thinking, what could be *that* bad? I already knew they were saying I was a poor money manager and did not accept wise counsel. I had anticipated that. Was there more?

She was finally able to blurt out some of what she had been told. They were telling people I was an alcoholic and drug addict, hiding this from the group during the past years. Even *I* was shocked beyond words with that rumor. How could anyone be saying those things to people who had known us intimately for almost ten years? How could our friends believe these things about us? Kerry also held up a sealed envelope in a meeting and said the information it contained would only be revealed in court. He said the documentation was about us and was so hideous that if people knew about it, they would never even be able to look at Patty or me again. June said none of it sounded true, but that they did not know what else to believe. Patty was crushed. Rob and June were two of our dearest, closest friends. How could people even repeat, let alone believe, that trash? Those people had been our nearly constant companions for almost ten years. We were always in the public and almost never alone. I was working on *The Business* day and night. When on earth would I have had time to drink or do drugs?

I immediately called Don, the doctor, and had him order a full drug screen for me at the hospital for documentation purposes. Within two hours of hearing the drug rumor, I was screened for all known drugs and had the results (which obviously were negative) sent directly to Don for safekeeping. I no longer felt safe even taking a prescribed medication for fear of rumor. Sadly, I gave the unused portion of my Valium prescription back to Don, who sealed and dated the vial for me. I could no longer even have the brief relief from nightmares that the pills had afforded me. Neither Patty nor I were eating or sleeping well. In fact, we often went through the whole day without eating anything. The stress was mounting, as was the fear and anxiety in our lives.

Keith, the distributor whose wife had sent him a letter saying she couldn't live like a single mother anymore, announced that, after going Ruby and driving 40,000 miles in a year, he had a net income of somewhere between \$4,000 and \$5,000 a year. He had said he felt like a phony. Our children went to the same small Christian school, because neither of us now trusted the "evils" of a public school system. I was the president of the Parent Teacher Fellowship for this school.

We had a fund-raiser after school one day when Keith approached me. He was obviously very upset. He pointed a finger in my face and told me he had it on good authority that my letter was full of lies. His wife had repeated this to other cross line distributors in our group. I would later be informed that Zack broke his own cross lining Cardinal Rule and asked Rick to call Keith and tell him the letter I sent was not true.

I attempted to remind Keith of how unhappy he had claimed he was feeling, and how he thought he'd be making more in a month than he makes a year by now. I brought up the fact that he almost never saw his wife and his children. He let me know, in no uncertain terms, that it was a lot better than having a job and being broke the rest of his life. He could not even *see* his own situation. He needed to get off the tapes, but there was no talking or reasoning with him. Nothing made sense. He was a middle-level insurance executive by profession, but he seemed unable to see the big picture.

I spoke with Sally, who also was a close friend and a Direct in our organization. She and her husband were being audited by the IRS and having deductions disallowed. In any event, she was kind, but very concerned. She, too, had heard the rumor of my drug use and also that I had a gambling problem. They had gone Profit Sharing Direct and had bought tens of thousands of dollars of vitamins to do it. They were no longer buying huge quantities of expensive vitamins, but were running their business at a loss, like most of

our group. I tried to tell her how little money even the high-level distributors were making. She was a very smart woman, but she simply could not grasp what I was telling her. She just kept saying over and over that they did not understand what *we* did with “*all the money*.” I tried to explain there never was “all that money,” and *that* was the whole point, but it only made her more frustrated. We parted as friends, but I was growing increasingly concerned for those who still seemed to be very much ensnared in this trap. She and her husband, an eye surgeon, were very intelligent people. How could they not understand the simple truth? They were dear, dear friends. Was I not expressing myself well enough to be understood?

We met with several more distributors at our house. None of them wanted to talk about their income, how much they were losing, or how little they were making. None of them wanted to talk about how much time they were away from their children or the fact that nearly every weekend was now tied up with Amway business of one form or another. Most didn’t want to talk about any specifics. They were very, very bewildered people.

They tried to tell me how The Business was a good thing. They didn’t want to give up on their dreams. I really began to feel like I was losing my mind. It looked like many of those good people might actually be manipulated into staying in The Business to their own family’s detriment. A growing torrent of conflicting thoughts whirled through my mind.

Some were acting like they did not know what to believe about us. I had not used drugs and rarely even drank a beer in the last ten years. Now, some of our closest friends were drilling me with questions about “*my problems*.” We had made our lives an open book and shared information and documentation with everyone. We were willing to bare our souls to help these people understand the truth. Patty struggled the most with this entire situation, because she is such an intensely private person.

The woman who delivered our mail came to the door and asked us to sign for some mail. We did that several times over the next few days as we received letters from most of our leaders. I did not understand. Even after all that was revealed to them, they still believed The Business was the only way for them to succeed and reach their dreams. This meant I was a threat to their hopes and dreams for their families.

The letters we received were all nearly identical cease-and-desist notices that threatened legal action if we had any future contact with them or anyone in their organizations. We were left questioning what “have no contact” actually meant? This was our family. We had no other friends. How could they possibly have believed all the garbage that was being told about us? *They* knew us better than anyone. The slander was vile and disgusting, but, fortunately, we did not hear the worst of it until months later.

Rick called. He and Patty had always been close and related well to one another. Nevertheless, he advised Patty that neither she nor I were to have any contact with anyone in his organization. He and his wife were convinced we were trying to destroy their future. We were dumbfounded. He had been treated horrendously by both Zack and Kerry for years. They had gone Emerald, but their income was even less than ours. They were making near or under \$20,000.

He drove a Mercedes he had purchased after going Emerald. After one counseling session with Zack, he told us Zack made him feel like a moron for buying the Mercedes because they had not checked upline first and gotten permission. In any event, I asked him where his group thought the money came from for the car. He didn’t have an answer.

Here he was with a pathetic income after having gone Emerald and he was driving a Mercedes in order to perpetuate a false image of financial success in Amway. He told me his group thought the money came from both his job and Amway. We both knew that it was a lie.

Our verbal warning to have no further contact was then followed up with a registered letter of the same nature. We had done everything except bleed to protect our team when they were getting mistreated. As a result of The Business, they had suffered intense personal challenges. Yet, Rick was nasty to Patty on the phone. Somehow, we had become the enemy.

Remember Chip, the distributor who called me Sunday after the seminar when we didn't show up? He was rather intrigued and initially amused when his sponsor and Kerry arranged to meet with him and his wife to explain away our exodus. Chip and his wife, Tina, accepted the invitation to meet with them, but were fully aware of what was truly going on because they had read the whole packet I had given them. Their entire upline thought they were in the dark and knew nothing of our exodus. They went to the meeting just to see how far people would go to cover this all up. They were relatively new distributors and had not been in the system long enough to be influenced yet, or so I thought. I was still a little nervous about the meeting, for their sake.

What happened next is still shocking to me. Understand that Chip's sponsor got the packet in the initial mailing and was aware of the entire situation. Before the big meeting, Chip's upline led him to believe I had cancer and my trip to D.C. was to seek medical help at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

They arrived at the meeting and waited. Kerry drove up in his white Mercedes, fashionably late, and did his typical Zack Walters imitation. He came in totally pumped up positive and talked about Quixtar and how much everyone was going to make. He told them he was going to show them how to buy a laptop for The Business and pay for it in 90 days. I found all of that to be very interesting, because I knew most active distributors in Kerry's group lost thousands of dollars every year despite incredible efforts.

Zack must have coached Kerry very well. He cushioned his talk with a story about some "stupid distributor" who questioned Zack about why one Diamond was in the old profiles, but not the new one. The Diamond had been "erased." He described how Zack handled it and told the distributor to ask only questions in the future that would benefit his business. The point of this oft-repeated example was that you needed to mind your own business — if you were worrying about someone else's business, you would never succeed. The Business was perfect; we just had to deal with people who were imperfect. The bottom line was, don't ask any questions about Patty or me or anyone else.

Kerry then went on to explain our exodus from Amway. He told Chip and Tina that Patty and I had some very serious personal challenges we were working through and our only request was that no one contact us. If they truly loved us, they would need to follow our request. Remember now, they had been told I had cancer. They were then told the very best thing they could do was to build The Business like never before because Patty and I were going to need the income. They needed to build The Business to Diamond so we would open the *Amagram* one day and see all of *their* pictures. Under no circumstances were they to contact us. Our only request was for privacy. After lying directly to them, Kerry then looked them in the eye and told Chip and Tina he loved them and he was going to be the best friend they would ever have.

Kerry was very lucky he was not attacked and beaten unconscious at that moment. With personal fortitude, Chip and Tina never let on they knew the truth. The next day, they made it clear they knew the entire situation and their new “best friend *who loved them*” became quite nasty with them.

I was shocked to hear the cancer story. How low could these people stoop? How could someone lie directly to people and then look them in the eye and tell them they were loved? I could not help but wonder what the going price was for the selling of a soul. We were only hearing bits and pieces of what people were being told by our upline in the group. There seemed to be one wave after another of lies and deceit. We were shell shocked that many of our closest friends now viewed us as their enemies. I was growing more fearful for our safety.

I realized the potential for physical harm was an ever-increasing possibility to my family and me. You see, I had helped this group of people believe that succeeding in Amway was *the only single way* to achieve happiness, success, and God’s will in their lives. Now, I stood between them and their goals. I was in a very dangerous place. I really did not know how far these people would go. There seemed to be no limit.

The Paper Chase

I began to do more research. Actually, I was going back over some of the nearly two-foot tall stacks of written documentation I had already accumulated, but with a difference. Now, I was able to understand and accept it. I found out that Amway *had* committed and was found guilty of fraud in one of the largest cases in Canadian history. Colin Grant, a professor of religious studies, made the following observations of this situation.

The denouement of the Amway integrity-success story was reached in 1983, when an Ontario Supreme Court Chief Justice fined Amway 25 million dollars, “the largest sum that a Canadian court has ever levied and one of the heaviest criminal penalties ever imposed against any corporation in the world” [“Amway Cracks—And Pays,” *Macleans*, 11/21/83] for evasions of customs duties. Behind this conviction lay an elaborate scheme of dummy invoices, and even a dummy corporation, designed to underprice Amway products shipment into Canada.

...There is no doubt that the President and chief executive officer of Amway were deeply involved in these developments. This is indicated not only by the magnitude of the operation, but by the nature of the corporation.¹

What about full adequate disclosure? Why were Amway prospects never advised that the company was investigated and fined for fraud? This was unconscionable.

¹ *Journal of Business Ethics* 7 (1988) 489-495

It's Time to Sling More Mud

***"You grow...or you quit...and starve the rest of your life.
What's the alternative?"****

— Birdie Yager

In one of Zack's last calls, he assured me I could sell my business and that it was worth "a lot." I had no interest in selling it to him or anyone else. Dan Bailey also felt a great need to remind me I could sell my business to a member of my upline. I told him I simply wasn't interested. Although we needed money desperately, I knew if I sold it and then exposed Amway and its motivational organizations as corrupt, I would be held liable for damages to The Business. Zack loved contracts and had once told us that even his warehouse employees had to read and sign every page of a 20-page-plus employment form. Now I understood why. It must have been a secrecy document. Despite the fact that I explained to Amway I had no interest or intent of ever selling my business, they sent me a packet of information to calculate its value. That, too, was a pathetic joke.

They calculated its worth as being several times the income of the Amway distributorship. That would value our business at around \$75,000. That was for a business that the upline had used to cull millions of dollars in tool money. Even though Amway had been fully aware of the existence and abuses of the tool business, they still pretended to ignore its existence or worth to the upline. It was a good deal for Zack to buy my Amway business for near \$75,000. The Amway business had an average monthly net income (for tax purposes) of near \$2,100 a month. Yet the tape, book, and seminar income stream had brought Zack millions of dollars. Do you think he would sell *his* business for several times what his Amway income was? They were dodging the real issue, and I had no interest in blood money.

I was fairly compliant, but did not have many future contacts with Bob Leatherman at the Distributor Relations level. He left Amway soon after all of this started. Dan Bailey took over handling my case as the head of Amway's Global Rules and Conduct Division. It soon seemed apparent to us that he headed up Amway's goon squad. This particular department seemed to be just as unethical and morally bankrupt as the upline from which we were attempting to escape. Dan told me I had broken several Rules of Conduct and had jeopardized our distributorship. In a telephone conversation, he explained how I had violated Rule 102(d) of the Rules of Conduct by sending my packet of information to non-personally sponsored distributors. According to him, having contact with those people without permission was a violation of that rule. I was still predisposed to following authority and agreed not to have negative contact with distributors in depth.

I had actually refused to give the packet to two distributors who had requested it. It dawned on me that Dexter, Zack, and all the Diamonds had contact with any and all distributors in depth almost daily. I found the rulebook and opened it to 102(d). I was surprised to learn it had nothing to do with what I had been told. Rule 102(d) prohibits

* Birdie Yager, *Ladies Session* audiotape, Stock No. GDL 95-23, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

contacting non-personally sponsored distributors for the purpose of soliciting them into another sales/business venture. Zack had told us that, once upon a time, Dexter had contacted him and many other non-personally sponsored Diamonds and called them together for several investment deals, including a fast food chain called Dexter's, a bank, and a travel agency. Zack's current *Profiles of Success* alleged he was the primary shareholder for the largest travel agency in the country.

I brought this to Amway's attention and was told this interpretation was used to "extend support and protection to the personal businesses of Amway Distributors." In the same correspondence, I was advised —

Additionally, Rule 102(n) stipulated that:

"An Amway Distributors must operate his or her distributorship in a financially responsible, solvent and business like manner." Sending a letter in depth and crossline disparaging your line of sponsorship could be considered in violation of this rule. Thank you for your continued cooperation with this issue."

My interpretation of the rules was very different. We had never even heard of any of them, let alone their enforcement. It sounded to me like the rules were being twisted and formed to make problematic distributors go away quietly. Perhaps it had worked and that was why it had gone on for so long. Informing our downline — and Amway — of possible widespread, systematic fraud was a violation of good business principles? This did not make sense because I still thought that, at its core, the Amway business was good.

The facts I would soon discover about the Amway Corporation and its billionaire founder Rich DeVos were worse than anything I could have imagined. Incredibly, at this point, I still wanted to believe that, at some level, Amway was a good business founded and run by truly compassionate people. Perhaps this has to do with my having spent ten years of intense labor on its behalf.

We received more bad news. Patty and I were spending lots of time volunteering at the small Christian school where our children attended. The pastor, who was a good friend, called me to his office. His wife had taught all three of our children. He explained to me that he had gotten "*the call*." At first, I did not know what he was talking about. But, then I remembered I had confided in him regarding the vicious slander we were being subjected to on a daily basis. An anonymous caller had phoned the office and told them I was involved in immoral activities and that I might be a danger to the children. Now I was a child molester? How far would they go to destroy us? I offered to step down as president of the Parent Teacher Fellowship, but he insisted I stay. Thank God, someone still believed in me.

Keith was a Direct in our group and his children were still attending this school. I felt certain his wife made the call or put someone else up to it. I never could prove who had done such a vicious thing and, after a while, it really didn't matter anyway. Pastor Dave and his wife knew us too well to be concerned about this unfounded rumor, so we continued serving the school. However, we were hurt that anyone could possibly say something so damaging about me. It seemed like people were trying to kill us with rumors. Our dignity, our friendships, and our life were slowly being extracted from us.

No wonder they call it character assassination.

Patty had lunch with some of the women in one of our organizations. They were all undecided on The Business as yet, but they were still friendly with her. She needed this outing very much. Our home had become a pressure cooker and it was a relief for her to get out for a few hours. We had become fearful to answer the telephone at times. We were reluctant to get the mail, as it brought so much pain in the form of cease-and-desist notices from our closest friends. How could anyone be afraid of his own mailbox? Patty came home and seemed to be fine. Thank God, the lunch had gone well.

The phone rang, and it was one of the women from the lunch calling from her cell phone. Patty talked briefly to her and turned pale. She was friendly, but got off the phone quickly and walked to our bedroom in a daze. Something terrible had to have happened. I just held her in my arms as she once again sobbed uncontrollably. She could not speak for quite some time.

Our friend had not wanted to tell her in front of the rest of the luncheon group that a travel agent in our group had told her Patty and I were getting divorced. She also had heard we were both suicidal, and people were concerned for our children. I had no words to comfort her, as tears flowed freely down my own cheeks. This was torture. The emotional pain was unending.

A few days later, Patty and I were alone in the house and I was cleaning out my desk to stay busy. I found three small booklets my kids had put together for me when I was away on one of my many trips. They had misspelled titles like *Why We Are Going Dimond*. They were each several pages long and included each child's precious dreams. I cried like a baby — not a silent cry. I was wailing loudly. Patty came quickly to the room, but I couldn't speak. I just held up the booklets. All I could say over and over again was, "I am such a loser." I could not tell you how long I mourned and grieved over the entire situation. I know we both faded into a state of emotional numbness just to survive. At that point in time, I did not know for certain if we would ever completely pull up from the downward spiral we both were experiencing.

David and Goliath

"You are God's anointed. You are God's anointed. When you are God's anointed, that 91st Psalm applies to you. People will die on the left and they will die on the right and you can walk on the snake's head, you don't do it on purpose, it just happens."*

— Dexter Yager

We were getting pressure from Amway to buy back books and tapes from people who quit after I told them the truth. I did not think Amway was in the tool business or in the business of making forced sales. I re-read the BSMAA we were forced to sign. It

* Dexter Yager, *Dex Tuesday Evening Part II* audiotope, Stock No. GDL 96-40, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

stated that tools purchased in the previous 90 days could be returned for refund at a reasonable commercial value. I shared this with the people who had quit, so they could recoup a small fraction of the funds they had faithfully dumped into Zack's tool coffers.

When they attempted to return them to Kerry, he refused them. He told everyone *I* had to buy the tools back. Dan Bailey of Amway now seemed to be very much involved in a tool business Amway pretended not to know about. He also told me I would need to buy back the tapes that were being returned. I was completely destitute after nine years in Amway. I was more worried about feeding my children, keeping my mortgages current, and having medical insurance than buying Amway tapes that were of no value to me. Distributors were then told to file complaints with Amway Rules and Conduct against me. In a bloodthirsty feeding frenzy, they did exactly that. I had become the enemy and, somehow, they all believed I had to be punished.

These had been my closest and only friends. We had no other friends and we had almost no social structure or interactions outside of Amway. It was as if we were falling into an endless black hole at an ever-increasing speed. I was sincerely concerned that our lives, mine particularly, might be in danger. Zack and my leaders were aware of my intent to go public from comments made in the initial packet I had sent out. I had moved beyond playing a game of cat and mouse. It was more like Daniel in the lion's den or David and Goliath.

I became increasingly fearful of Amway, Dexter, and Zack from information I was collecting and documenting. I earnestly believed there was enough money at stake for me to be permanently *removed*. Who was *I* compared to five or six billion dollars a year in ongoing Amway revenues? The global tool business was conceivably generating a billion dollars or more a year.

We became afraid to go outside. We were even fearful of going shopping for groceries. We were totally overwhelmed at the grocery store. We did not know what to buy. We did not even know most of the brand names, after having been maniacally loyal to higher-priced Amway products. We had been so well conditioned by Amway that we felt guilty doing essential shopping. It was an anxiety-provoking experience we endured again and again. What if a distributor in our group saw us? By now, they had been told I had lost my mind.

We did not know if they would look at us pityingly or spit on us. What if they saw us with a basket full of negative products? I had told them in seminar after seminar, "That is what broke people do." I carried a nagging thought, and I was afraid to tell Patty, that we might have to move far away to start a new life. I did not think we could live where we were much longer, but we did not have any money to leave. We could not believe that I went so quickly from being heralded as a hero and leader to being considered an alcoholic, lying, drug-addicted, lunatic, gambling, adulterous, child molester. Yes, distributors were also told I was having an affair. What else would they think of?

In my heart, I actually thought I had *become* a loser. None of the above accusations were true, of course, but I **felt** like I was still a loser. The mental stress was beyond comprehension. I had brought many good people to the slaughter and I was unable to save or protect them. I had thought I was helping them. Now, some of these families were tens of thousands of dollars in debt, gone night after night and weekend after weekend.

What a Tangled Web We Weave

I began to contact attorneys throughout the United States for appropriate legal representation. No matter what course of action I took from that point, I felt Amway would try to take me down with their enormous legal weight and political influence. My godfather was a West Coast attorney. He knew F. Lee Bailey and agreed to contact him for me without mentioning my name. He did and called back to say that F. Lee was a personal friend of Rich DeVos and would not take the case. Wasn't that convenient?! I contacted multiple offices of well-known attorneys across the country and began to understand why this had gone on for so long. Most wanted a \$10,000 retainer right away and fees as you went along.

I contacted the attorneys of plaintiffs currently suing Amway. I spoke with some of the plaintiffs and agreed to testify for them. We shared some vital information and I was very thankful to talk to people who understood. My search for appropriate legal representation was discouraging. I was flat broke and nearing bankruptcy. One plaintiff had almost \$150,000 tied up in his case. It sounded as if their strategy was to tie people up so long that they just relented or went broke pursuing justice. The odds did not look good. Goliath was standing tall and grinning at me.

The loaded gun I wore every day did not give me peace. I could not go to the Attorney General's office in our state's capital city because a high-ranking attorney in the building was an Amway Direct in Zack's group. Everyone was incredibly well informed and connected. I remembered Dexter talking about having, as part of his group, Secret Service agents who reported what happened in the White House.

My sister-in-law worked for the local Attorney General's office and I explained my predicament to her. She arranged a meeting with a local FBI agent, Lou Glodek. He was very friendly on the telephone and arranged to come over to see me at my home. I prepared for our meeting by sending him a system video and a good amount of overview documentation. I also put together another stack of documentation approximately four inches thick. There was plenty of evidence, all right.

I was terror stricken by what happened next. I was speaking with a current plaintiff against Amway and shared that I was going meet with an FBI agent. He said there was a high-level FBI agent over in the Philadelphia office who was an Amway distributor. He knew this because another plaintiff had attended the highly secretive Yager Network Marketing Institute (YNMI) and the FBI agent had been his roommate. I was really scared now. Dexter had FBI agents, too. This was spinning out of control.

My nightmares began to increase in intensity. They began **every** night like clockwork around 3 a.m. I was powerless to stop them. I hated sleep, yet was absolutely, completely exhausted. I literally felt a weight on my head and shoulders, almost as if I was carrying something that would eventually crush me. I had to resist. This *had* to stop.

I tried not to panic when FBI Agent Lou Glodek pulled up with a second man in his car, which was not part of the plan we had discussed. They came to the door and rang the bell. Lou was low key and identified himself by showing his Federal ID. The other

man was Wayne Samuelson, an Assistant U.S. Attorney. I was not comforted and actually felt uneasy as I took them down to my small office. My fear and growing paranoia were getting the best of me. We made small talk and they both seemed like good guys.

I asked Lou if the complaint I filed stayed in his office or if it went to the Philadelphia office. He said it stayed local. I asked him if he knew the agent I had been told about in Philadelphia. He said he did know him. I asked if he was aware of the fact he was an active Amway distributor. He acknowledged he knew that as well. He told me the agent in question was not a high-level agent, but a lower-level trainer who had recently retired.

I was still fearful. I could no longer definitely identify the bad guys. This was not like an old western movie where the good guys wore white hats. Oh, how I wished it were! I provided Lou and the Assistant U.S. Attorney with a large amount of information, which I asked them to return. They took it, but I never saw it again. Fortunately, I had made multiple copies of everything, protected and stored offsite, in the event we were “burglarized.” I had also done extensive legal research into pertinent court cases. Wayne seemed to perk up when I handed him large quantities of pertinent legal documentation, referencing precedent-setting court decisions. They left with the documentation I gave them and took with them my hope for justice to be served.

The most pertinent information came from a case called Webster vs. Omnitrition. This was a case the United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit received in September, 1995. The Court’s decision was rendered on March 4, 1996. The plaintiffs, Shaun Webster and Robert Ligon, were distributors of a company called Omnitrition that handled health and skin-care products. They alleged and made a claim stating they were the victims of a pyramid scheme which emphasized remuneration through personal recruitment instead of retail product sales.

The court found in favor of Webster, but the reason *why* was vital to our situation. Some background information is necessary for the importance of this decision to be clear. In essence, Omnitrition’s compensation plan may have been similar to Amway’s. Many multi-level marketing plans took this approach, as it kept them low under the regulatory radar, so to speak. In 1979, the Federal Trade Commission decided that Amway Corporation might resemble a pyramid structure, but that it did not fit the definition of an illegal pyramid scheme. One of the biggest reasons the regulators ruled in favor of Amway in their 1979 decision was this:

“Unlike pyramid companies, Amway and its distributors do not make money unless products are sold to consumers,” the FTC said in its ruling.

“The Amway Sales and Marketing plan is not a pyramid plan.”²

This was very strange, as we were taught by Amway Diamonds to recruit people to buy things at “wholesale” from their own business and to recruit others to do the same. We were taught to remain loyal to our product line with 100% self-use, which often resulted in the hyper-consumption of Amway products which were frequently far more expensive than what could be purchased locally. I was not sure if even a single distributor, of the thousands our organization brought in, *ever* did 10 retail sales in a single month.

² *The Advocate*, 04/26/98, *FTC Says Amway no pyramid but...*, Greg Garland, Baton Rouge, LA

Amway senior management and the Amway Diamonds were well aware bonuses were being paid without the mandatory retail sales. We had met Larry Harper, a senior manager in Amway's Distributor Relations department. He acknowledged in a public interview that bonuses were paid to distributors who had no retail sales. When asked if a distributor can get a bonus without having retail sales, Larry responded, "Yes, you can."³

Amway distributors were often told that Amway's sales and marketing plan was the legal yardstick by which other multi-level marketing plans were judged. This gave a sense of credibility. As I read the court decision, I realized Amway was flagrantly in violation of its own Rules of Conduct. If reviewed again with the same litmus test, the FTC would most likely find Amway to be an illegal pyramid scheme.

Rich DeVos made comments relevant to this issue when discussing the closed nature of the tool business, in which books and tapes were sold only to members of the organization. When there was no sale to a consumer end user, he described this type of business as an "illegal business -- in fact, it could be called a pyramid."⁴

From the information I was uncovering and beginning to understand, it looked like Patty and I, and perhaps millions of others, had been recruited and induced to participate in not just one, but two illegal pyramid-type businesses. The first was the tool business which had no end user outside of the organization, and the second was **the** Amway business. From the FTC's decision, the Appeals Court decision, and Mr. DeVos' comments, it appeared that a multinational organization of distributors that had almost no retail sales was, in fact, an illegal pyramid. We would never have gotten started had we been told we were expected to sell Amway door to door.

With Amway's full knowledge, recruitment exploded when this very important detail was left out of recruiting and distributor training. Retailing to customers was not emphasized as the primary method of building sales volume. Zack and his leaders taught us exactly the opposite. We were told to recruit by never saying the words "Amway," "products," or "selling." We were told to recruit others by stating we were offering a wholesaling business in which you bought things from yourself and taught others to do the same. It was a lot easier to recruit large numbers that way. I had a Diamond on tape actually saying he "didn't sell stuff..." It was all beginning to fall into place.

The sheer recruiting effort and self-use propelled Amway into the billions in annual revenues and the tool money made the Diamonds rich. We thought they were doing it in Amway. I would soon be enlightened beyond my wildest comprehension when I obtained the actual figures from a tax return and saw how little an Amway Diamond made from Amway. However, there were battles to survive before that lesson in reality.

"Go read the Old Testament. See how mad I can get. No big deal for me to just tear bodies apart and throw pieces all over. You want me to get upset cause they scratched your finger? Let 'em pour it all out and then let me chop their head off, I'll just snap their neck off, throw them on the pile of life. You're mine, trust me. Trust me. You're not

³ Ibid.

⁴ Directly Speaking tape transcript, Rich DeVos

here without knowing what I'm talking about."^{*}

— Amway Crown Ambassador Dexter Yager

^{*} Dexter Yager, *Dex Tuesday Evening Part II* audiotape, Stock No. GDL 96-40. Copyright Internet Services Corporation

Rich DeVos Knew All Along

*“Rich DeVos is uniquely qualified to explain why Compassionate Capitalism can lead to financial success for the individual, the community and the nation. By his own lifetime achievements, Rich has proven why compassion for all of one’s fellow citizens is a mandatory key to success.”**

— Gerald R. Ford, Former President of the United States

Dan Bailey from Amway’s Rules and Conduct department advised us on repeated occasions that we had to get a signed servicing agreement from Kerry and Chris and pay them a percentage of our bonuses. He also told us we had to buy back all the tools that members of our group who had quit were attempting to return. That was ridiculous. I was not aware of a single case where someone was charged a servicing fee for having their upline service their own downline. Whenever someone quit, you simply worked with the next person they had sponsored as a course of business. Kerry and Chris were free to unethically rape and pillage the group for meeting funds and take the small tool break we had been receiving.

They were financially better off without us. They also had the benefit of ongoing income from our organization. We had spent what seemed like a lifetime trotting the globe to build it and they were going to just step in and reap the benefits. We had no use for books and tapes from a business perspective and we had no intentions of ever supporting or building The Business again. We had bought them all from Kerry and recommended *he* repurchase them, as he could re-sell them into his own group or return them to Zack, who made many of them for pennies on the dollar. I requested — actually begged — on multiple occasions by fax and certified mail that either Zack or Kerry just take care of this. There was no net cost to them. We just wanted to get on with our lives, or at least try to start a new life.

It appeared that Kerry thought he could blackmail us into signing anything. We made Dan Bailey, Zack, and Kerry aware of the fact that we were destitute. We were close to bankruptcy and I was still unable to land a job. If Amway cut off our income, we would certainly go bankrupt, lose our medical insurance, and, most likely, our home. How far would they go? I was not impressed with their complete lack of damage control, if for no other reason than to keep their dirty little business hidden in the dark. We might have just gone away had they let us. The first pound of flesh they had taken by stealing our dignity was not enough. We were still far too healthy for them to stop the torment. When we thought it could not get any worse, it was just beginning.

* DeVos, Rich, *Compassionate Capitalism*, (Endorsement by Gerald R. Ford)

One of our downline Silver Directs quit The Business and called us. Thank God, Kirk and his wife finally came to their senses. They had lost a large sum of money and a vast amount of time away from their only daughter. They quit after going to a seminar where Zack's next Directs' trip was announced and promoted. The Diamond on stage was talking to Directs when he did the promotion. (Remember, the Directs were supposedly the first level of big income earners. The organization thought they were making from as much as \$54,000.) The Diamond told them they all needed to get to the near week-long meeting in Miami, no matter what. All the leaders would be there. He told them if they needed to get a second, third, or fourth job to pay for it, they should do whatever it took to get them there. It also had to be booked through the trip planner picked by Zack. How much blood could they suck out of those people? They were supposed to be working The Business and were told to go get multiple jobs to pay for yet another seminar? That was the final straw that blew Kirk right out of The Business.

A local upscale grocery store was hiring management and it looked like a great place to work. They had a chain of family-owned stores which had grown to a billion dollars a year in sales, and I wanted to have a future there. Thankfully, I got to the third interview with flying colors. The manager was a gentleman named Mike and we really hit it off. I would have enjoyed working for him. His team of leaders sincerely seemed to respect him. I met with him and his boss for a final look over. I was one of those in final consideration for the position. I was hopeful and waited almost two weeks for an answer. I called Mike and he told me I just wasn't the right fit for the job, so they gave it to someone else. I thanked him for his time. I went downstairs and put my fist through the wall.

I was not a fist-through-the-wall kind of guy. I was unable to see myself as the man of the house, because I could not even get a stinking, lousy J.O.B and provide for my family. I was worthless. My mind was tormented with a raging stream of conflicting thoughts, feelings, and emotions. I did not know who or what I was. I felt no normal emotions. I wondered if I would ever become the same man I was years ago. I could not even conceive what happiness felt like. I literally could not remember the emotion. I did not know what thoughts were truly mine.

I needed help. I went to my family doctor. I was beginning to suffer from both physical and psychological problems. The skin on my hands was actually peeling off until they bled. I was developing an ulcer and drank antacid like water. The nightmares and false heart attacks were becoming more frequent and increasing in severity. I could not think and could barely carry on a conversation. While waiting for the doctor in an exam room, I read a poster on the wall. It listed all the signs of clinical depression. I had them **all**. I explained our entire situation to him and he was very reassuring. He prescribed an anti-depressant medication that would knock me out at night. Although I was able to sleep at night when medicated, my waking moments became more and more tormented. It was clear to me that I was not in control. Patty was growing weary from the unending stress and from losing all our friends. They weren't just gone — they actually hated us.

Kerry refused to sign a "servicing agreement" for us so that Amway would pay us our bonuses, even though a handful of our downline distributors were already picking up from him. About that time, Amway went to direct fulfillment, which meant that all distributors could order products directly from Amway. They would also be paid directly, so there was no bookkeeping now. All Kerry and Chris would be doing, essentially, was

selling tapes, books, videos, and seminar tickets to the group, as well as doing training sessions which created a profit for them.

I have never heard of a single instance where a distributor in the Yager organization was forced to sign a servicing agreement. In fact, almost all of Dexter's Emeralds and Diamonds picked up from someone other than their direct sponsor. For example, an Emerald would pick up from the next upline Emerald and a Diamond would only pick up from the next upline Diamond. I now knew *that* was done to conceal the secretive tool breaks at the Emerald level and the huge tools income at the Diamond level. I informed Dan Bailey that nearly every Emerald and Diamond in the Yager organization was supplied by someone other than his sponsor without a written servicing agreement. I made him aware of many of the same long-term situations in Zack's, Kerry's, and my own distributor organization. Regardless of the above, he wouldn't relent. Without the agreement, we would not get our money. He and my upline seemed to be in a collaborative effort to destroy me both personally and financially. I felt like an isolated target of their silencing machine.

What's Good for the Goose Is Good for the Gander

Amway repeatedly attempted to steer me toward informal conciliation which would lead to binding arbitration. The BSMAA was written with a gag order embedded in it. Once you go into binding arbitration, you are no longer able to discuss the basis of your complaint with other litigants, or with anyone else, for that matter. Jody Victor, the mega-millionaire distributor who, by his own admission, helped craft the BSMAA, worked with Amway management and/or ownership to actually have it made part of the Amway application. Incredibly and unknowingly, one of the first acts a new Amway distributor commits is signing a document taking away their right to a trial by jury if and when they ever realize they have been deceived. An attorney involved in current litigation with Amway advised me that it seemed to have been carefully crafted to also assure there could never be a class-action suit brought against Amway or its kingpin distributors. That was a smart legal move, as a lone — and likely destitute — former distributor seemed to stand no chance against an over-funded, legally advantaged Goliath.

One key area of promoting Amway over other multi-level marketing businesses was the emphasis our leaders placed on the Amway Distributors Association (ADA) Board. This group was made up of many Diamonds (and even higher-level distributors) who were voted into office to represent the distributor force on any policy changes. We were told we were the only Company with distributor representation on a policy board of this nature and that this protected our interests and futures. Each election, Zack would pass along a list by Amvox from Dexter as to who he was voting for. We were all to vote similarly; consequently, the deck was usually stacked with Yager or Yager-friendly leaders. I was dumbfounded to realize all these mega-wealthy distributors seemed to derive most of their income from the secretive, if not illegal, tool business and had just crafted the document we were all forced to sign. The "risk reduction" BSMAA document limited distributors' legal options for recourse if they realized they had been robbed and deceived. The very people who alleged to represent our best interests just collaborated

with Amway and reduced their mutual risk in the event we discovered the truth.

We could most likely go into arbitration and walk out with a huge settlement, but then we would never be able to speak of what happened again. We could never help all those who were doomed to believe in the same people we had trusted. We could not, in good conscience, take care of ourselves at the expense of many others. Perhaps we were foolish and should have looked out for our own welfare. If only someone had spoken up years ago, we would not be where we were at that very moment. I did not want to be the spokesperson, but I felt a deep sense of moral obligation and saw no other choice.

It looked like Dan Bailey was intending to cut off our income, even though we had been told again and again that the income was residual and could be passed down to future generations. The whole Amway sales pitch revolved around entrepreneurship and personal business ownership. Did I ever really own anything? If I could work for a decade and then have someone randomly stop my income from “my” business, was it ever truly mine? I think not.

In my research, I discovered some shocking news about both Amway and its multi-billionaire co-founder Rich DeVos. He knew of the rampant tool abuses and deception we fell prey to as early as 1983, and most likely long before that. I had trusted him and my upline with all my family’s future and nearly a decade of my life. He knew exactly the deception and abuses that we, and millions of other distributors, were going to be subjected to six full years before Patty and I became loyal, trusting Amway distributors. This whole situation was far worse than I had thought. It was looking like the Amway owners and senior executives were involved at the highest levels. It is clear they knew what people like Zack and Dexter were doing, and Amway seemed to now be part of it. Why would Amway collaborate with those involved in the deception and financial rape of its own global distributor force? The answer was soon to come.

“We had two couples live next to us. They decided they were going to destroy us. They had made everybody who had bought that house that we lived in leave. They were the Mayor of the street. They had driven everybody away. Two years after they came against us with everything they had, all four of them were dead. All four of them were dead!”*

— Dexter Yager

My research continued as I dug deeper and deeper to find out how large this fraud really was and who the key players were. Through the Internet, I was able to develop a small network of trusted former distributors across the country who were eager to provide information. What I learned next broke my spirit. It was hard to believe, yet the facts are the facts. I found the following court documentation and comments on a web site titled *Amway: The Untold Story*, which was researched and made public by web host

* Dexter Yager, *Dex Tuesday Evening Part II* audiotope, Stock No. GDL 96-20, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

Sidney Schwartz. He discussed the “Cairns vs. Amway” lawsuit, filed by a group of 77 distributor couples from multiple states in the Dexter Yager-Bill Britt line of sponsorship. The case was filed for abuses nearly word-for-word identical to the misrepresentation and fraud we were subjected to years later.

Internal Amway management documents filed in the case further revealed,

“Subsequent legal evaluations disclosed that the disproportionate (to Amway) sales, intensity and solicitation of these “tools/systems” are illegal, per se, under several U.S. federal and state laws.”

“That operating and/or participating in a solicitation, sales and/or distribution scheme involving only non-consumer items - particularly motivational tapes - violates state pyramid / chain distribution laws, and could lead to Amway distributors being indicted and/or convicted of criminal fraud.”

I was shocked to read this, as the tool business was described in this **Amway internal document** as an enterprise that **violated state pyramid laws** and could result in Amway distributors being indicted and/or convicted of criminal fraud. If this was common knowledge in the early 1980s, why was nothing done to prevent me and millions of others from being lured under false pretenses into an enterprise that Amway acknowledged could result in a fraud conviction?

I explained to senior Amway management, in writing, that in the Yager/Walters organization, the purchase of tools was mandatory. They appear to have taken no action against them, even though this information was provided via fax and certified mail. In fact, Amway has lavished the worst offenders with enormous financial bonuses. Amway was knowingly **rewarding** the behavior of the greatest offenders with year-end bonuses of millions of dollars. Distributors were recruited en masse with the presentation that they had *access* to a system of success with a 100% success rate. Once they were actively involved, the highest levels of Distributor leadership taught us to cut off support and assistance to anyone who did not buy into the system. If you wanted help from your apparently wise, wealthy upline, it was necessary to be willing to invest in “yourself” and “your own business.” It started out gradually, but we were soon coerced and manipulated into purchasing an unending array of standing-order tapes, videos, books, CDs, and seminar tickets.

I am deeply shocked and saddened to find and read transcripts of tapes which reveal that Rich DeVos had personal knowledge of fraud, illegalities, and abusive practices. The quotes below are excerpts from the “Directly Speaking” tapes made by Rich DeVos. To his credit, these tapes were initially made and sent to Direct Distributors to stamp out these abuses. The revelations of how much he knew in 1983 are shocking.

The following quotes are from a transcript in the Cairns lawsuit labeled Exhibit “A”, Directly Speaking, January 1983, Rich DeVos Amway Cassette Series VA-2160. Mr. DeVos was clearly well aware of the fact that there were wide-spread, rampant abuses when he stated:

“I’m telling you I need you’re [sic] help on cleaning up some of these situations. Now, I got -- as we said -- I got stacks of letters that came in -- I -- I can’t tell you how many of people have written. Hundreds and thousands...”

Incredibly, despite multiple lawsuits, bad press, and “hundreds and thousands of letters” flooding Amway, they would later make a statement to the effect that distributors who got ripped off by the deceptive, completely non-voluntary tools system were an unfortunate isolated incident in the Amway business. Further research revealed that a couple named John and Stacy Hanrahan filed a class-action lawsuit over typical, systematic abuses on July 20, 1994. They claimed they lost money after being coerced into participating in the tool business and nearly got divorced after succumbing to the cult-like teachings of *the system* of their upline, which included mega-distributors Bill Britt and Dexter Yager. They filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of themselves and a group of distributors. The abuses they alleged were nearly identical to those of distributors who came both before and after them.

Amway’s posture in this situation was mind boggling. Amway Vice President, Craig Meurlin, commented on the case in the 8/17/96 edition of the *Philadelphia Enquirer*. In considering the proposed settlement to the plaintiffs in the case, he stated,

“We’re just pleased to move on. Stacy Hanrahan and the other plaintiffs had a very abnormal experience with the company.”

That was ludicrous. This was anything **but** *abnormal*. This was **typical** of what was happening to distributors, and Amway had known this for over a decade. I was sickened by what I was learning. The 1983 DeVos transcript continued with Rich DeVos quoting an excerpt from a letter a distributor had sent him:

“(Unintelligible) . . . I consider myself to be an -- ambitious, aggressive group. Directs, that was (sic) determined to reach their set goal at the expense of the Distributors, come hell or high water. Their philosophy, “Mortgage your home, cash in your insurance, get a bank loan and borrow from whosoever will loan you.” We were told in our, and I’ll leave the name out because it would identify the organization, in our so and so meeting, certain things discussed were to remain within the walls wherein discussed or suggested.”

The comment regarding keeping some information among themselves was interesting. As I later discovered in my extensive cult research, *that* admission became very meaningful. There was a clear distinction of tiers of knowledge and what distributors were allowed to know at each level. Entry-level distributors literally had no idea what was happening to them as their seemingly successful, warm, and encouraging upline sold them on The Business and led them into the system. As a high-level Emerald distributor, I still had no idea what the true agenda of our upline was at the time. As a reader of this

book, you currently know more about Amway than I did after spending personal time with Rich DeVos and Dexter Yager, and after nearly a decade working with the highest-level distributors in the world.

From a second tape he made, also called Directly Speaking, date unknown (probably Feb. or March 1983), Rich DeVos Amway Cassette Series VA-2160, Rich talks about a deluge of nearly identical letters he received in response to his first Directly Speaking tape.

“Let me take some of the kind of nasty ones first. They kind of come in groups, by the way. You can always tell when some person in the business -- perhaps in a leadership position -- has called together his Directs and given them the word, because a whole bunch of letters or telegrams come in; and they all say exactly the same thing.”

This was an interesting comment, in light of the fact of what had happened to *us* with the cease-and-desist letters. Within three days of a meeting with my upline, who told our closest friends to send them, we were inundated with letters, all reading almost exactly the same. Some even had the same typographical errors in them. One distributor in our group, who called Dan Bailey to complain that Kerry would not buy the tools back at any price, was advised by Dan Bailey to file a formal complaint *against me*. He shared with Dan that he had no interest in that, but Mr. Bailey mailed him the complaint form anyway. The distributor said he filled it out and filed a complaint against Kerry. It was amazing that Amway’s head of business conduct was advising distributors in our downline to file complaints against us. The apparent reason for this would soon become clear. Once a sufficient document trail had been created, they could then take action against us in an apparent attempt to financially starve us into submission.

“Rich DeVos is one of our country’s most successful businessmen”*

— George Bush Former President of the United States

I would later go on to personally inform, by fax and certified mail, current Amway President, Dick DeVos (Rich’s son), of the mandatory nature of the tools business. Distributors had actually been advised that if they did not have enough money for products *and* tapes, they should just buy the books, tapes, and seminar tickets to continue to educate themselves. Nearly every “plugged-in” distributor in my organization had been induced to build what **Rich DeVos had years earlier defined as an illegal pyramid.**

The illegal pyramid and “bait and switch” of the business was a topic I had discussed at length with both the FBI and the Assistant U.S. Attorney. They both seemed to have a clear grasp of the situation. When I finally called FBI Agent Lou Glodek to see what he could tell me about the investigation, he told me he could not discuss it. I did not

* From his endorsement of *Hope from My Heart* by Rich DeVos.

know if that was good or bad. An investigation could have been killed politically by now, or it could be in full swing. I continued to obtain information regarding Zack's open and seminar meetings and faxed Lou updates so that the agents could attend.

Again, from Rich DeVos' 1983 message:

“I've not tried to say to you, you can't sell tapes or books or motivational aids to your people; but I am telling you that if your secondary business is other than a support mechanism in a reasonable volume level in relationship to your Amway business, it may very well be an illegal business.”

I understood why Zack warned us not to talk to a lot of people or get any new ideas when we went to Ada, Michigan, for our Direct Distributor seminar. The “new ideas” were most likely that the tools system was corrupt and that our recruitment into Amway was predicated upon misrepresentation. The other new information we might have received was that we were supposed to be selling products to customers to get a bonus. There were a lot of skeletons in this closet. I was deeply saddened, enraged, and physically nauseated to learn this had been going on for decades and to know that people, who were in a position to, did not stop it. The transcript revealed more, beginning with Mr. DeVos quoting yet another distributor letter complaining of abuses:

“He says, My concern lies in two areas. The most recent event occurred last evening. Our sponsors told us that (and it's and an 'Emerald' under 'so-and-so') -- said that, “My wife and I were considered inactive and could no longer receive BV from our legs.” Wow. “Therefore, our BV check for January was \$2.69, based on the BV of the products we use personally.” Who said you have the right to cut anybody out because they don't follow you? Unbelievable abuse of power, arbitrarily deciding who's active and who's inactive and who is entitled. We will be following up on that one personally.”

That made my blood boil because it was exactly what Amway was doing to me. I exposed systematic fraud and/or global abuses to my organization and to Amway. I declared that I was going inactive and I was about to have my income shut off. Now, it was **Amway** that was actually cutting my income out in collaboration with my upline. It was outrageous. It seemed as if we were trapped in an incredible web of deceit and hidden loyalties and agendas. I initially was led to believe that I owned and controlled my own business. Millions were brought in believing this. However, as Amway has clearly known for almost two decades, distributors would be cut off and put out in the cold if they questioned their upline or refused to totally buy into their system.

The answer to this near two-decade-old, rhetorical question appeared to be fairly evident. It looked as if Amway and its leadership and ownership sold their collective

souls to the god of money, power, and greed. By working with Jody Victor and others on the BSMAA and its related gag order, they had effectively bound and gagged their own distributor force to be repeatedly and silently gang raped by the Amway Diamonds for system funds. Mr. DeVos' intentions in 1983 appeared to be both noble and in the best interest of his company and its growing global distributor force. However, it was obvious that he did not follow through and *stop* the abuses. Did they have the power to take that next step? Certainly they did. They could have stopped the income of the abusing "Kingpins," just as they were about to shut off mine.

There was a symbiotic relationship between Amway and its kingpin leaders and their systems of success. The systems were of no value without Amway as a front company to recruit well-meaning, ambitious people. Amway's success and exploding volume came almost exclusively, we were told, from these huge organizations. Certainly, Amway would have taken a financial loss in terminating the offending kingpin distributors. It would, however, have protected the people who came into Amway believing it was a way for them to improve their finances.

By allowing the major distributors to continue to abuse and to deceive their people, Amway was catapulted to an estimated seven-billion-dollar-a-year global giant. Looking the other way may have had its perks, as Amway and its owners accumulated a large private island in the Caribbean (Peter Island), as well as a fleet of corporate yachts and jets. To hell with the families who had come to them with trust and hope! I am so sickened to learn that what happened to us could have been prevented. While Rich DeVos was accumulating his multi-billion-dollar net worth, he knowingly allowed countless families like ours to be systematically destroyed. I began, once again, to spiral into a deep depression and personal darkness that seemed to know no end.

"Tonight you had the privilege of being in a room with one of the richest men in the world, Rich DeVos, who went beyond my parent's teaching to teach me so many principles in the business world. Birdie and I grew up loving this man. It's been a special night when he came here out of retirement to honor Birdie and I."*

— Crown Ambassador Dexter Yager

* Dexter Yager, *Crown Ambassadors Dexter & Birdie Yager*, Stock No. FED 94-12, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

“The War of the Roses”

*“Newsweek is proud of its marketing partnership with Amway. Amway’s extensive advertising campaign in support of Junior Achievement can play a significant role in bringing entrepreneurial ideas and opportunities to business people everywhere.”**

— Carolyn Wall, Publisher *Newsweek* Magazine

The “Directly Speaking” tapes started a battle between Amway and the motivational organizations over the tool business. The aftermath of these tapes caused what Billy Zeoli referred to as the “War of the Roses.” Billy was the President of Gospel Films and frequently spoke to Amway groups and particularly to Dexter’s Emeralds and Diamonds. He also worked closely in Michigan with Rich DeVos, who happened to be Chairman of the Board of Gospel Films. They also have Gospelcom.net, the most successful Christian Internet site in history, with over one billion hits a year. We “passed the plate” at many seminars and contributed, at our upline’s request, to Gospel Films.

A literal legal war broke out between Amway and the high-level distributors who were reaping fortunes from their surreptitious tool businesses. The legal war, combined with some bad press, caused Amway’s annual revenues to plummet by tens of millions of dollars within twelve months. It sounded as if Billy acted as a go-between for Amway (or Rich DeVos) and Dexter at some point in this war. At a leaders-only Emerald meeting, Diamonds talked about those hard times. Some spoke of being summoned to hearings at Amway headquarters and being told Dexter Yager was a crook. One Diamond shared how she went to a meeting with a tape recorder and a bodyguard snatched it out of her hands before the meeting. Did Amway have a goon squad to intimidate people? Deeper research appeared to confirm Amway’s willingness to use strong-arm tactics on anyone who dared verbalize opposition. Amway was becoming a very wealthy, influential company. In 1991, *Forbes* did a story on Amway and its leaders. This article stated:

DeVos and Van Andel have become very powerful men. Former Presidents Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan have addressed Amway rallies. Some Senators have been Amway distributors, as have celebrities like Pat Boone and former football coach Tom Landry. All of these role models help inspire the Amway movement with a patriotic and religious feeling.¹

The article went on to illuminate some of Amway’s problems:

* Carolyn Wall, Amagram, June 1999

¹ *Forbes*, 12/09/91, “The Power of Positive Inspiration” Klebnikov, P.

Former distributors and Amway officials say that, like many movements based on a cult of personality, Amway's attitude toward any insider critical of the organization has bordered on paranoia. Edward Engel was Amway's Chief Financial Officer until 1979; he resigned over a disagreement with DeVos and Van Andel on how to run the Canadian operations. That apparently branded him a traitor; he says he and his family received threats for years after his resignation. "It was a Big Brother organization, " says Engel today. "Everyone assumed that the phones were tapped, and that Amway had something on everybody."

In 1983, Engel's former secretary, Dorothy Edgar, was helping the Canadians in their investigation of the company. She was roughed up in Chicago, after she was told to "stay away from Amway." Engel, who picked her up after the incident, says he believes her story. Amway would not comment on the incident. There was extremely bad publicity in 1982 when a former distributor, Philip Kerns, quit to write a damaging expose called *Fake It Till You Make It*. Kerns charges that Amway used detectives to follow him and rough him up. Kern's expose prompted The Phil Donahue Show and 60 Minutes to run uncomplimentary pieces on Amway. Amway's recruitment dropped off; with it, sales plunged an estimated 30% in the early 1980's.

In 1984, another former Amway insider, Donald Gregory, says he started to write a book on Amway, but the company obtained a gag order against Gregory in a Grand Rapids court.²

Amway was fully aware of the problems and did not stop the abusive high-level leaders. I was an unlikely whistle-blower, as I had wanted more than anything to discover that I was wrong about everything.

I read and re-read the documentation several times over a few months. During the last couple of readings, the system-induced psychological coma had been wearing off, and I was now able to think more clearly and reason at times. My thinking was not yet consistent, but I had several days in a row when I could actually function almost normally. I would then crash into depression and a fog-like trance. This would last for well over a year.

Keep the Home Fires Burning

"You are God's anointed!"*

— Amway Crown Ambassador Dexter Yager

² Ibid.

* Dexter Yager, *Dex Tuesday Evening Part II* audiotope, Stock No. GDL 96-40, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

I was now able to spend almost all my time at home with my family. Out of the horror had come the opportunity I had striven for all along. I literally loved my family more than life itself. You would think this would be a relief to me, but I was tormented now by our time together. For years, I had been tormented by our time apart. How can I help you understand this? I was strangely nervous about the time at home and often felt compelled to leave at strange hours. I had not been home much in the afternoons, nights, and weekends for so many years that Patty had developed her own life and schedule. We did not know where we fit into each other's lives or what our roles should be. I was a stranger in my own home and being there, during what had been my non-stop work hours, made me panicky and nervous.

I played with my kids and we actually took walks to the park as a family. Often, when we arrived at the park, it would be near 8 p.m., which was the time I would have been showing the plan. I felt panic stricken and guilty. If I loved my family, I would be out performing for them and securing their future. The old programs were still running powerfully in my mind — without my consent. We sat in bed and watched television shows as a family. We had heard again and again that it was the “hell-a-vision” and the “electronic income reducer.” We had heard of losers who would nightly succumb to the “blue hue,” as they went broke. In my own seminars to very large crowds, I had often reinforced this point by imploring the men to be *real men* and *heroes* to their families by setting the example. They did not want to be “couch potatoes raising little tater tots!” It was an effective joke to make the point clear.

Previously, before a counseling session, the wives of Directs in our group would call Patty or me and report on their husbands for watching TV when they should be out getting financially free. I would then address this problem by using third party examples so the husband wouldn't know he had been exposed. What a sick perversion of loyalties. I really felt ashamed of myself.

Continual letters from our upline and Amway arrived, and I was feeling a tremendous financial pressure. I had not been able to secure employment despite a flurry of resumes and interviews. I had not anticipated being unemployed for such a long period of time, as I had never gone without a job more than a few weeks in my life.

Amway was posturing to stop my income if I did not agree to buy back many books and tapes that were of no commercial value to me. I also would not meet face to face with my gun-toting sponsor. His over-the-edge loyalty scared me. I did not know what he was capable of doing and I really did not want to find out either. There seemed to be no limit. I was unable to purchase the tools back, as I was financially destitute. Even if I had the money, I was unable to purchase them and then resell them into my group. I had been threatened with legal action for having any contact with my own organization. Most importantly, I now believed the tool business was completely deceptive, unethical, and illegal. I would have nothing to do with it.

Amway was going to cancel our income if we did not obtain a written servicing agreement from Kerry and Chris. They were well aware of our dire financial situation because I advised everyone who needed to know with certified letters. We were unable to make even the minimum payments on the massive debt we had accumulated while we had been Amway distributors. We attempted to keep our mortgages current, but were forced to file for bankruptcy. It was one more degradation. We actually had to borrow money to pay the fees for an attorney to help us declare the bankruptcy. We had had so

much of our human dignity stripped away from us that we numbly and painfully filled out all the appropriate forms. We were like zombies by then. How far would this go?

Our upline seemed to find new ways to harass us and, once more, they pummeled us unmercifully. They made insane demands that looked very much like blackmail. Dan Bailey at Amway Rules and Conduct continued to try to steer us toward the informal conciliation process. This was a funnel that could lead to binding arbitration, perhaps an enormous check for us, and then silence. We would not do this. Despite the fact that Patty and I and Kerry and Chris have serviced non-personally sponsored distributors for years for no fee and without an agreement, they pressed for an agreement with a 15% fee of our total monthly income. At one point, they even pressed us to pre-pay other trumped-up costs, knowing full well that we were destitute and unable to meet any such financial requirement. During this, we told Zack, Kerry, and Dan Bailey we were being forced into bankruptcy. We told them we had already lost our medical insurance and were facing foreclosure.

Kerry made more far-reaching demands as our situation worsened. He agreed to sign a servicing agreement, which allowed us to save our home and keep our medical insurance, *if we* agreed to release Kerry and Zack from any liability related to our Amway business. In another ridiculous blackmail-like offer, they agreed to sign the servicing agreement *if we* signed a form stating essentially that we would not transmit, publish, or broadcast (in any form) our experiences in Amway.

We could save ourselves if we simply turned our backs on humanity. Had we signed it, you would not be reading these words. We wondered how long it could all last and how far they would go to completely destroy us. Dan Bailey seemed to be working in harmony with our upline and openly carbon copied them on some correspondence to us.

Water, Water Everywhere and Not a Drop to Drink

We were feeling incredibly pressured when I sent a professional letter to Dick DeVos, Rich's son and the new President of Amway. I was fearful that Amway would cancel our income and we would lose our home. The letter I sent was not hateful or angry, and I felt it would win him over with reason. Part of me wanted to still believe this was a good company. Naively, I believed that the letter I sent would resolve our situation. With the single exception of concealing my sponsor's name, the text you read below is the complete, unedited version of the letter that I faxed and sent by certified mail to him regarding our status.

May 21, 1999

Amway Corporation
Dick DeVos, President
7575 Fulton Street East
Ada, Michigan 49355

RE: Amway Emerald Nightmare

Dear Mr. DeVos:

I am writing this to you as someone who, like you and your family, has shown total dedication to Amway. For nearly the past decade, I have driven and flown hundreds of thousands of miles in several countries to build the Amway business. It took enormous effort, work and perseverance to reach the level of Emerald. We brought in an enormous amount of people from every walk of life and spoke to thousands from stage. So far, this sounds like the type of Amway success story that your dad had envisioned decades ago. I have defended your father, my upline, and Amway to all that I know.

The unfortunate truth is that my wife and I, like tens of thousands of others, were snared in a carefully orchestrated psychological web of deception called the system. This, combined with the cult like manipulative control techniques, employed as a normal course of business by the many in Diamond leadership, have led to me filing for bankruptcy. My wife and I walked from active participation in this business for ethical reasons (see letter enclosed).

I understand that both my upline and Amway have a vested interest in salvaging my organization. It is amazing that we were heroes to the masses a short time ago. However, since we left our friends/group have had the following rumors circulated:

- 1) I am a drug addict
- 2) I am an alcoholic
- 3) I have a gambling problem
- 4) I am having an affair
- 5) My wife is sleeping with one of our Directs
- 6) We are getting divorced
- 7) I falsified tax returns that were shown to my leaders
- 8) I told (Kerry's true name here) that the way to make big money in Amway is to go Emerald and sue

There are more, but I think you get the picture. **None of the above are true.** Those were enough to give my wife, whom I love dearly, a nervous breakdown. I had thought the attacks would be confined to me at least. This does not appear to be in the spirit of what your dad started.

Imagine our heartbreak as we just read the transcripts of the Directly Speaking tape. There is no way to express the depth of our shock or pain to learn that Amway was fully aware of these distributor abuses in 1983, a full six years before we started on as excited, young Amway distributors. Dan Bailey, in your Global Business Conduct Department, has a lengthy letter that we sent to our directs detailing the extensive

abuses we endured as loyal Amway distributors. In the letter is a transcript of a tape recorded counseling session with my upline Double Diamond in which he teaches me how to coerce/force mandatory participation in the tool business. In this line of sponsorship, it costs a minimum of \$2,500 a year **just in system costs** to remain an Amway distributor. There are other, multiple examples of the “forced” nature of this “voluntary” support system in the letter.

To my knowledge, **Mr. Bailey has taken no action on any of these incredible violations of Amway’s own rules of conduct and the BSMAA.** Quite the opposite is true. I just received a letter from him threatening to cancel my ADA over a non issue when the above rape of a huge distributor force is being apparently overlooked. Enclosed is my response to Mr. Bailey.

Sir, there is no way for you to right the wrong we have suffered at the hands of our upline. You cannot give me back the last nine and a half years of my life in which I was used as a pawn to unwittingly extract almost \$4,000,000 in tool/seminar money from the people I love the most (distributors). Almost all have failed economically from being taught to bring in more people and get them on the system as opposed to doing volume. **I will carry that guilt and shame for life.** What you can do is “call the dogs off.” I am negotiating with my sponsor (letter enclosed) for the formal written agreement that Mr. Bailey is threatening to cancel my ADA and meager income over. I have not yet found a job. I have lost almost every possession I have with the exception of my home. I have three small children and would like to keep a roof over their heads.

I think the Yager “system” and other systems were perceived as a *necessary cancer* by Amway at some point. Your dad mentioned in the Directly Speaking tapes that the system should never be more than 10-20% of your dollar volume because this would be considered a pyramid as it only takes from the sales force with no end user to retail to. In many instances in our line of sponsorship, the system cost are **100% or greater** than the dollar amount of products that the distributor is moving. The system is now, in fact, the business. The cancer has overtaken the body and the tumor appears to be inseparably intertwined with something that was once so good.

I do not expect a personal response, but I would be glad to speak with you. We are not the average couple to buy a kit. We sacrificed all on the belief of the goodness and integrity of our upline and Amway. I am asking for your assistance in ending our nightmarish experience in something we once believed in with all our hearts and soul.

Thank you for your time.

Eric Scheibeler

I was relieved to send this off, as I felt it was well thought out and would appeal to Mr. DeVos' sheer sense of basic integrity. I could not have been more wrong, judging by the response. You see, neither he nor his staff ever did respond to this certified letter and the fax which went directly to his office. Now you would think that the President of a multi-national, multi-billion-dollar corporation would have an interest when a key leader exposes enormous global abuses. Perhaps, as the analogy goes, the apple does not fall far from the tree, as many distributors had previously written to his father for years over the same issues. Pathetically, Dick DeVos had made the statement below to us at a seminar.

"I hope that you'll know that if there is anything that I can do personally to be of assistance to you, and to support you and help you achieve your dreams and your goals with this business, I stand ready to do anything I can; because we are about a wonderful mission that you and I can feel very, very good about together."*

— Dick DeVos, President of Amway

You would have thought all the revelations from my research would have brought us comfort. But we felt even more injured and abused knowing that what happened to us could have been prevented. I was further sickened knowing how we were used and manipulated from our very first contact with Kerry and Zack. This may be the largest, ongoing, most well-coordinated, well-orchestrated theft by deception in the history of business. I could not believe it had gone on that long. I also could not believe the magnitude of the beast we were up against. How could I expose this deception and help people? I *had* to get the word out. How would I keep my home and feed my family? We now had bill collectors calling us sometimes twice a day, which added to our daily stress. We were fearful to go out in our own community. It was like a strange land to us now and we were very uncomfortable with it.

There was never either an acknowledgement or response from Dick DeVos or his office staff. I did, however, receive a letter from Dan Bailey dated June 24, 1999, stating that, indeed, they were shutting my income off. They were not keeping it; they were just "putting it in escrow." They also advised me they were going to begin taking 10% of the money I was not getting and paying it to a Direct as a forced servicing fee. Although we received no money from the global business we had developed, Amway decided to pay Kerry and Chris 10% of it every month. They began to get paid from our escrowed funds, and we stopped paying on our mortgages. Free enterprise is a wonderful thing. Rich DeVos had written a highly touted book called *Compassionate Capitalism*. Was this his version of compassionate capitalism?

We began to worry about how we would feed our children. I was stunned and in shock. I truly did not believe they could be quite so evil. Our upline was probably dancing with glee, as we were further punished and humiliated.

* Dick DeVos, *Guest Speakers*, Stock No. 97-9, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

I was so angry and ashamed. I had just gone to my father a few months earlier and borrowed over \$10,000 to bring many bills current. We had been paying him and his wife, Kelly, monthly. I now had to default on payments to them, after I had lured them into Amway and extracted money from them for Amway products and system tapes. I did not know how I would ever face them again. More than anything, I had wanted to make them both proud of me. I felt like I was a total and complete failure to all who knew me.

I was drowning in an image of the blood of good people being washed over my head, as I learned how many more were getting deeper into The Business and were being further seduced to buy large amounts of constantly changing tools, tapes, CDs, laptops, and videos for the upcoming launch of the Amway owner's Internet company, Quixtar. It was slick, sexy, and high tech, and I believed many more millions of distributors would be recruited. The new high-tech venture was mixed with the same mind-numbing combination of *the system*, patriotism, religion, and loyalty that had overtaken us.

The Republican Party seems to be an off-site division of the Amway Corporation. In addition to direct contributions, many politicians garnered huge fees for speaking at large seminars and praising Amway, America, and Free Enterprise. Amway groups have had the support of such speakers as Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Sr., Jack Kemp, and many others. Former President Gerald Ford even spoke very highly of Amway. A former distributor told me that George Bush, Sr. may have been paid as much as \$100,000 to speak at a single Amway seminar. Newt Gingrich was known to sing Amway's praises at large Amway rallies across the nation. I met him when he spoke to thousands of distributors at a large rally in Hershey, Pennsylvania. At that seminar, he said:

"Nothing would do more to help the people that used to live in what was called the Soviet empire to achieve prosperity, to achieve freedom, to achieve opportunity than to have sixty or seventy thousand Amway folks go over there and start recruiting"*

— Newt Gingrich

USA Today ran an interesting article on Mr. Gingrich, stating the former Speaker of the House of Representatives raked in a windfall fee of "\$50,000 a speech."³ Could those large amounts of money actually be considered an investment for Amway or its motivational organizations? The answer to that question would soon be evident. One report discussed a "\$283 million payoff"⁴ for Amway's campaign contributions. It described a new budget package that was amended by an apparent friend of Amway. "The payoff for Amway was not in the original House or Senate version of the tax bill. House Speaker Newt Gingrich intervened at the last minute to help get the special tax break inserted in the bill."⁵ The book *The Buying of the Congress* sheds more light on this

* *After All We Are Americans* audiotape, Newt Gingrich, CE-50

³ *USA Today*, February 09, 2000 p 21A "Gingrich out of office, but hardly out of ideas," William M. Welch

⁴ *San Antonio Express-News*, August 12, 1997, "Amway Has Voice in Congress," Molly Ivans

⁵ *Ibid.*

sweetheart deal:

It could not have hurt that from 1994 to 1996 Amway gave \$366,000 to Republican Party causes and candidates and that it employs Roger Mentz, who was the Assistant Treasury Secretary for Tax policy in the Reagan Administration, as its tax lobbyist.⁶

The more I learned, the greater the deterioration of my psychological well-being. I was overwhelmed by the contrast of a wealthy, apparently corrupt billionaire getting a \$283 million dollar tax break for his company while I was struggling to find food money for my family after telling the truth. Goliath's shadow seemed bigger than ever.

Creatures from the Black Lagoon

The panic attacks and nightmares came back. Patty and I were so shell shocked we walked through each day like zombies. Survival was now a one-day-at-a-time goal for both of us. We had no idea how to communicate after being silent for so long concerning our real feelings. She was able to tell me she was angry at herself for not jumping up and down and shouting about how much she hated our life. She told me she had hated our life for years and never trusted Zack. I, too, had hated our life, but had no idea what was wrong during the last few years. She was angry with me for continuing against all odds. She was angry with herself for sometimes encouraging me because the encouragement was what often kept me going. She knew I was doing it for her and the kids, but was unimaginably hurt for literally being abandoned for years. She was a single mom, an Amway widow. It was so confusing when my love for my family was used against me to keep me out and away from them constantly.

I told her I would have stopped had she let me know how she felt. We were now shouting. She told me if she had given me the choice between her and Amway, I would have chosen Amway. I was screaming that *that* was insane and that I loved her — and *that* was why I did it. I calmed down after a while, and I realized she was right. It was all so sick. Had she given me the choice between her and Amway, I probably would have gotten an apartment and worked non-stop to go Diamond to prove how much I loved her. That was crushing. I felt like I was entering a twilight zone. The torrent of conflicting, screaming thoughts returned. I had destroyed the very person I loved the most in a business that was supposed to give us income and family time. I had lost almost everything I had been promised.

I needed help desperately, but I did not know where to turn. I was in a cave of darkness. I could barely decide whether to eat or what to wear at times. I went down to our swimming hole and smoked a cigar with my only trusted friends — the gun, a can of mace, and a beer. I prayed for death. I had ruined all that I had hoped for my entire life. All I wanted was to be successful enough to be a good father and husband. I was worthless. In the depths of the deepest despair, I decided there was no God. I renounced

⁶ *The Buying of the Congress*, Charles Lewis, Copyright 1998 The Center for Public Integrity

my salvation. If there even was a God, I would curse Him. I was utterly and completely hopeless. I told no one of this, but I was obviously no longer qualified to strap on my concealed gun and teach adult Sunday School.

Feeling broken and hopeless, I thought I was losing both my mind and family at the same time. I appeared to lose most of my sense of taste, and I saw everything almost in a subdued black and white. I never knew such a darkness even existed. I cried often, for no reason. After it started happening in public, I knew I was falling apart; yet I was obsessed with exposing this horror. We were going into foreclosure. I learned of other distributors who alleged they had gone bankrupt, lost their homes, or gotten divorced as a result of their experiences as Amway distributors. I used to laugh at “losers” who said those kinds of things. Now, I was one of them.

I discovered the cultish abuses and fraudulent business practices were global in scope. Through the Internet, I was able to make contact with many former distributors. I documented nearly identical systematic abuses in many countries. I became a low-profile member of an Internet underground of former distributors who shared information and encouragement. I contacted a few people myself, and some were sent to me for help, as they attempted to de-program from their Amway motivational comas. One woman had just come from a cult wellness center called Wellspring. Her life had been destroyed in nearly every sense by her Amway experience. We offered each other encouragement and intuitively understood what the other was going through.

I continued to contact plaintiffs and their attorneys to offer high-level, insider testimony and documentation. I was talking to a current plaintiff when I received the most chilling news to date. He asked me if I had heard about the murder. I told him I had not. He asked me if I was familiar with the Morrison lawsuit in Texas. I was well aware of that suit, because it was one of the largest in Amway’s history and involved high-level distributors like myself.

Dr. Joe Morrison was a spokesperson for the group of 29 complainants, most of whom were at the Emerald level. They collectively were seeking over \$200 million in damages. The number of distributors in the group had been estimated near as many as 40,000. Among the plaintiffs were three doctors, a chiropractor, and other professionals. Many of these people had left their full-time careers, just as I had done. In a press release issued by their attorneys, Dr. Morrison made the following statements:

This lawsuit has been filed because there is something rotten in the Amway organization. We have tried unsuccessfully to work out our complaint with Amway and others through the system, but it only gets worse. We had no choice but to take this step.

It is truly ironic that we have found out the overriding principle this company has preached so hard — integrity — is the quality that has been largely absent in the past, bringing us to this stage.

We all thought that Amway was the key to our future, and the future of our families. We worked as hard as anyone, and did what we were told to help our business grow. In the end, though, we weren’t ready to sacrifice our own integrity to enhance our business.

We all thought we were going to be living the American dream, if only we worked hard enough. What we found out is that if we allowed the wrong to continue, it would be really more the American nightmare.

On August 13, 1998, the judge in this case ordered it into Amway's forced binding arbitration and silence. When I spoke with the offices of one of the attorneys involved, I was advised that they were shocked by this action, as some of the plaintiffs involved had never even signed the form. They were vigorously appealing this decision.

The person who had asked me if I had knowledge of this case had heard that a child of one of the defendants had been kidnapped and killed in a possible attempt to get them to drop the suit. This sounded even too far out for me. It was reported by an individual who was very close to many of the Amway scandals and lawsuits. I called him and explained I was a renegade Emerald and I had discovered all the problems he knew about already. Once he was comfortable that I was actually who I said I was, I asked him about this alleged murder. He not only had heard of it, but he gave me the name of the convicted killer on death row. The name was Hilton Crawford. I asked him about the circumstances and he did not know firsthand, but had heard from multiple sources in Texas that the original target was Dr. Joe Morrison's family. He heard that, on a seminar day, Dr. Morrison's house had been broken into, but no one was home. The murderer, he heard, went to another home and kidnapped, beat, and shot another distributor's child. I was shocked, but tried to remain calm. As I began my own investigation, I did not even want to allow myself to believe this could be true.

I researched this myself and eventually found factual information in *The Dallas Morning News*. The paper reported that Hilton Crawford was convicted of murder and sentenced to death for kidnapping and killing a 12-year-old boy named McKay Everett in a botched extortion attempt. Chillingly, the newspaper reported, "McKay was abducted from his Conroe home Sept. 12, while his parents were attending an Amway meeting. He was beaten and shot, and his body was dumped in a Louisiana swamp."⁷

I was in total disbelief and did not know if there really was a tie into the Morrison case, but believed that possibly Amway and/or Yager operatives were fully capable of being involved in something like that. Just how low would they stoop? Murder?

I grieved for the poor family. They, too, were away at a meeting, hoping to improve their lives for their family's sake, and what they loved most was stolen from them. This could have happened to any Amway distributor, as their schedules were so predictable. At least one night a month, they were away for a local open meeting at a hotel. One Saturday a month, most were normally away for a whole-day-and-evening seminar. Their schedules were an open book and an open invitation to predators.

I took and have maintained extraordinary security measures to protect my family that will not be discussed in this book. I told the FBI about my own death threat and felt it was very real. They took the Diamond's name and address who had made the threat. They also requested copies of cancelled checks that had been made out to Kerry and Chris as well as Walters International (Zack's business name).

I felt certain I was going to be killed. The terror was intense. There was too much money at stake. I became nearly insane with paranoia. When I walked alone, I walked in

⁷ *The Dallas Morning News*, 07/25/96 Associated Press

a stagger step, as I knew that kind of gait made it more difficult for snipers. I was ready at any moment for my bullet. This was insane.

I had told too many people I was going to expose everything. I had told too many people that I might write a book. One day, I was walking our children down near our swimming hole when Grace, an older neighbor, stopped and began talking to us. She was always walking and was a delight to talk to. We shared pleasantries for a moment and then it happened. We both instinctively winced as a staccato of gunfire erupted from behind us. I arched my back toward them and tensed, looking her in the eye as the bullets ripped through my flesh. Somehow, I had thought it was going to hurt more than that. Time froze. I realized that this poor woman and my children were about to watch me bleed to death. The kids were okay. *I* was the target. Thank God, she would take them home. It would all be over in an instant.

The “gunshots” were actually just firecrackers set off by kids on a small walking bridge behind us. She jumped a little, laughed, and continued on her way. I turned the other way and was gasping for air. My chest was heaving uncontrollably. I could not catch my breath.

There was no end to the torment. I could tell no one of the events in my now seemingly insane world. I caught my breath after about fifteen minutes and joined the kids, who were already playing down by the water. I heard nothing they said. They were so sweet, but I could not even hear their voices over the mounting clamor in my mind. I did not know what was happening, or maybe I did...

Reach Out and Touch

I reached out for help and attempted to locate Ashley Wilkes, the formerly “evil” web site owner. He no longer seemed evil to me. There was no way to contact him through his web site, but I learned of where he worked and tracked him down through his employer. We corresponded by e-mail, and I thanked him repeatedly for helping deliver me from the bowels of deception. He, too, had paid an enormous price as a distributor. He felt it had cost him his marriage, because his wife left him — and she was now living with a man who would help her to build The Business. Ashley lost custody of his precious daughter, Ruby, and it pained him greatly.

We set up a time to talk, and we bonded immediately from our shared Amway experiences. He had been in Amway in a completely different motivational organization, but the deceptions and lies were identical. I read a transcript of the plan his upline did, and he used the exact same joke I did to make a point. We talked and laughed when I told him I had fantasized about meeting him and beating the crap out of him for being a negative loser and for taking shots at my upline. He shared how he felt like a total failure. I encouraged him by telling him that he was far from being a loser and that, one day, Ruby would know and recognize him as a hero. He wept openly on the phone and I cried, too. It was such an avalanche of emotions. It was a comfort to speak with someone who understood.

He, too, was under siege from Amway in the form of a legal process. They were draining his nearly non-existent resources in an apparent attempt to get him to shut his

web site down by tying him up with subpoenas for his computer hard drives at home and work. Ashley informed me that his legal bills were near \$14,000 by the time they were done with him. When he could afford no more legal fees or psychological strain, he had to allow Amway access to his computer hard drives. He also had to shut down his web site. This was terrifying to me, as his hard drives may still have had many e-mails from me on it. Big Brother was alive.

Ashley had helped many people like myself to “deprogram.” He offered this service for free to any who contacted him. It was a therapy to him to help others, as he felt almost defenseless in stopping this burgeoning, dark predator. To shut down his site and not be able to help people was a crushing blow to him.

Ashley became a close friend, mentor, and confidant. We had much in common. The greater the personal destruction that was heaped upon us, the greater our resolve became to stop the harm being done. He proved to be a tremendous resource to me, as I uncovered more and more about The Business. At times we felt strong, but most of the time we felt entirely helpless against this towering dark force that was coming against us. He mentioned there was quite a bit of information on cult mind-control techniques that were being used on distributors. It sounded a little far out there, but I listened.

I shared this idea with some of our friends who had quit and explained that there might be some type of mind control involved with The Business. In a few days, one called and told me to turn on a talk show named *Leeza*. I turned on the television and tuned into the show. It was, indeed, about cults and destructive mind-control techniques.

There were two guests on the show. One was a well-spoken woman named Deborah Layton, who wrote the book *Seductive Poison* after being in the Jim Jones cult, which resulted in 913 tragic deaths in Guyana in 1978. She was one of the few survivors. Her mother had died there. Some of the deceptions she talked about had vague similarities to situations that had occurred in Amway, but I *knew* I had not been in a cult.

The other guest was a gentleman named Dick Joslyn, who had been one of the few surviving members of the Heaven’s Gate cult. He, too, was very articulate and said something that caused the audience to mock him. He said something to the effect that any one of them could be recruited into a destructive cult. They jeered him, as I silently disagreed. I was too smart for that. When the audience quieted down, he made a point that altered the course of my life. He told the audience something they had not understood. He explained that cults do not recruit stupid, weak people. They recruit smart, ambitious, well-meaning people who would in turn recruit others. A red flag went up. We had always been told to “sponsor up.” Sponsoring up meant to recruit the sharpest, most credible people you knew, as others would come into The Business quickly based upon their credibility. I was not jumping up and down yet, but there were some parallels that I needed to explore.

It was strange. I could tell I had flashes of clarity and, then, without rhyme or reason, I fell off the deep end. As I watched that show, I was able to think clearly and I acted quickly. After some quick web-based research, I ordered the books *Seductive Poison* and *Cults in our Midst*. I also began to do preliminary research on a man named Steve Hassan. His name came up quite frequently. He had been a former high-level “Moonie” in the Unification Church, a group that former members had branded as a cult.

The books were helpful. *Seductive Poison* was informative, as the author described how she was seduced into the cult by deception through the charismatic

leadership of Jim Jones. There seemed to be several parallels between her experience in leadership in the Jones cult and our experiences as young leaders in Amway. Jim Jones had used the credibility of then California State Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, as well as that of President Carter's wife, Roslyn, in building his own image. He demanded total loyalty from his followers, who thought of him as a father. He even had "a makeshift goon squad to enforce his perverted will."⁸ Jones also had a habit of keeping his followers off balance. They both loved and feared him at the same time. This was sounding too familiar.

Cults in Our Midst was even more informative in relation to my experience. Here I will quote bits of text that seemed to jump off the pages at me as I devoured this book:

Others have thousands of members, operate multinational businesses, and control complex multi-million- if not multi-billion-dollar organizations. Cults are not always easy to recognize at first glance.⁹

Readers should know that a number of cults are highly litigious and use their wealth and power to harass and curb critics. Citizens, academics, journalists, former cult members and their parents, and publications ranging from *Time* magazine to the *Journal of the American Medical Association* have been the targets of legal suits brought by various wealthy cults in efforts to intimidate and silence critics. Defending himself or herself against the false accusations made by some of these cults can break the ordinary person. It appears that winning is not the most important goal for the cults. Their motivation appears rather to be to harass, financially destroy, and silence criticism.¹⁰

Cults are authoritarian in structure. The leader is regarded as the supreme authority, although he may delegate certain power to a few subordinates for the purpose of seeing that members adhere to his wishes and rules. There is no appeal outside of the leader's system to greater systems of justice.¹¹

Other groups want to recruit members into pay-as-you-go programs and, therefore, target employed persons with money-making skills, to whom the cults will sell "courses," gradually hooking these people into greater and greater commitment to the group, as well as selling them more and more expensive courses.¹²

The key to successful thought reform is to keep the subjects unaware that they are being manipulated and controlled — and especially to keep them unaware that they are being moved along a path of change

⁸ *Seductive Poison*, Deborah Layton, An Anchor Book, Copyright 1998 Deborah Layton, p xxiii

⁹ *Cults in Our Midst*, Margaret Thaler Singer with Janja Lalich, Copyright 1995

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, page xxiii in Intro.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, page 9

¹² *Ibid.*, page 22

that will lead them to serve interests that are to their disadvantage. The usual outcome of thought-reform processes is that a person or group gains almost limitless control over the subjects for varying periods of time.¹³

In particular, when you question, you may be made to look ridiculous and called a renegade, a spy, an agent, a nonbeliever, or Satan, or whatever disparaging terms are used in your particular group. There's always an internal language with terms to ridicule or denigrate. In some way, you are made to feel bad for doubting or questioning. You're convinced by the closed logic of the cult and by peer pressure that to question means you don't believe enough. So you stop questioning.¹⁴

Exhaustion and confusion increase cult members' inability to act. In most groups, members are made to work morning, noon and night. It's no wonder they become exhausted and unable to think straight.¹⁵

In this context, to think about leaving becomes completely overwhelming. If escape even crosses your mind, you think - where would I go? What would I do? Who would accept me? You have lost so much self esteem that the thought of leaving is unbearable. You can't imagine abandoning your protected little universe to go out into the horrible world that all the time you've been trained to believe is the other, the evil, the bourgeois society, or of Satan. The non-believers are not going to accept you. The minute they find out that you were in "that," you are going to die on the spot or be chased away. Nobody would hire you; nobody would want you; you will never have a relationship. You are a loser.¹⁶

Thank you, Margaret and Janja. Thank you so much. You were angels of mercy. I was not insane. Maybe I wasn't a loser. Maybe I did not deserve death. They are two people I hope to meet, if not work with one day. Their work, in part, saved my life. I was far from healthy, but now had a small glimmer of hope. I was still in bad shape, but continued my cult research with incredible vigor while having "healthy" days.

I discovered the work of Robert Fitzpatrick while researching the legal aspects of Amway and *the system*. He is a nationally recognized consultant, speaker and author on distribution trends. His work involves evaluating factors of trust, ethics, and integrity in distribution channels. He co-authored *False Profits: Seeking Financial and Spiritual Deliverance in Multi-Level Marketing and Pyramid Schemes*. This book revealed much of what I had discovered in the Amway organization. However, his book brought my purpose more clearly into focus because it revealed the deceptions that are often an integral part of these businesses.

Robert wrote another small book that specifically addressed Amway entitled *The Case for Reopening the Amway Pyramid Scheme Case*. This book is not written for the

¹³ Ibid., page 52

¹⁴ Ibid., page 269

¹⁵ Ibid., page 270

¹⁶ Ibid., page 272

mass audience as it addresses, in great detail, the legal issues and FTC rulings involved. It is written specifically for regulators, attorneys, journalists, talk show hosts, and business leaders whose work requires sorting out finance from fraud. I located a copy online at www.falseprofits.com and subsequently provided it to the FBI agent I was working with. This detailed why my book *had* to be written. Someone *had* to stand up to protect the many silent victims.

"Victims are rendered silent out of shame, embarrassment or guilt. In Multi-Level Marketing programs, many are kept silent by being convinced that they are not victims of a scam but only of their personal failures. Failure, they have been told by the promoters, is attributable to their own weak character, lack of ambition, negative thinking, inadequate commitment, unhealthy fear or pathological attachments to poverty. Little wonder they do not rush to the Better Business Bureau, to newspapers or their state Attorney General to announce they have lost their money."*

— Robert L. FitzPatrick

The leads I now had made it easy to learn a great deal about Steve Hassan, who is an expert in cultism and in rescuing people from the psychological meat-hooks that gripped people in cults. I went to his web site — www.freedomofmind.com — and was both shocked and elated by what I learned there. On his web site, under the Common Psychological Problems of Victims of Cult Mind Control Section,¹⁷ is a listing of seventeen symptoms.

Out of all the symptoms listed for cult members, I had all but one. I was both shell-shocked and wonderfully surprised to find information that led me to believe that I might make it.

I found other information on Steve that enabled me to be willing to take the chance and trust him. At that point, I trusted no one but Patty. Steve Hassan had been a high-level Moonie recruiter in the Unification Church. He had personal contacts with leader and multi-millionaire industrialist Sun Myung Moon. He, like me, was recruited into the group by deception. He was love-bombed and told how sharp he was in the initial recruitment phase. He eventually was indoctrinated to cut all social contacts outside of the group and believed he was part of a great good for the world. He, too, had his male leader replace his own blood father while in the cult. He described it as follows:

* FitzPatrick, Robert L., *False Profits: Seeking Financial and Spiritual Deliverance in Multi-Level Marketing and Pyramid Schemes*, Copyright 1999

¹⁷ www.shassan.com/problems.htm

In looking back and analyzing the relationship, I see that I allowed Kamiyama to take the place of my father. The kind of verbal approval and physical affection I sought from my father was given to me by this man, who used this emotional leverage to motivate and control me.¹⁸

“We’re parents to our downlines...We take the knowledge we learned the hard way and give it to our people. And we help them mature in the business until they become our peers. They pass their knowledge on to their ‘sons and daughters,’ and soon we have our ‘grandchildren’ and ‘great grandchildren’ in the business.”**

— Amway Crown Bill Britt

As Steve progressed through the ranks, his experiences in many ways paralleled mine as an Emerald in Amway. Being an Emerald was an elite status, and few ever attained it in comparison to the number of distributors recruited. Mr. Hassan made a statement that sounded as if he knew Dexter and Zack. He wrote:

Mr. Moon and Mr. Kamiyama knew how to cultivate their disciples to be loyal and well disciplined. Members of the core leadership were trained to follow his orders without question or hesitation. Once I had become totally indoctrinated, all I wanted to do was to follow my central figure’s instructions. I was so committed that I had suppressed the real me with my new identity. Whenever I look back now, I am amazed at how I was manipulated and how I manipulated others “in the name of God.”¹⁹

Steve provided invaluable documentation to a congressional subcommittee investigating the Unification Church’s activities. He provided a copy of “The Master Speaks, a set of private speeches by Moon reserved for Unification Church leaders and members.”²⁰ Incredibly, I had copies of the secretive leaders-invite-only YNMI seminar tapes. One of the tapes I am making public is one by Dexter Yager entitled “Teachings from the Master.” It was so bizarre. It was my life; yet, I could barely believe what I was learning. I not only might have been in a cult, I could possibly have been a cult leader. The more I learned about cults and destructive mind-control techniques, the more clearly I saw what was done to us and countless others. It certainly explained the rampant confusion in our group when I revealed the truth. That explained the enormous slander and financial bullying we were enduring.

I felt certain that, to some degree, Patty and I had endured a cult experience. I studied more about Mr. Hassan. His family rescued him from the cult, after he had an

¹⁸ *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, Steve Hassan, Copyright 1988, 1990

^{**} Britt, Bill, *Profiles of Success*, Copyright American Multimedia, Inc.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, page 21

²⁰ *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, Steve Hassan, Copyright 1988, 1990

accident while in a total state of exhaustion. He suffered a severe fracture of his leg, but it gave his family a chance to get him away from the cult. His exodus from the Moonies was nearly word-for-word identical to what Patty and I had been going through. He went on to describe his exodus by saying,

I read for months. For me, the burning issue was how the Moonies had ever managed to convert me and indoctrinate me so thoroughly that I could no longer think for myself. I read everything I could get my hands on. At first, the act of reading itself was extremely difficult. I had read only Moon literature for more than two years. I had difficulty concentrating and was sometimes spaced out for long periods, not comprehending what I was reading.²¹

I was elated. Not because of the pain he had gone through — far from it! I finally had some answers! It was about 3 a.m. and, as usual, I was down on my computer doing research. I typed up a lengthy letter and faxed it to Mr. Hassan to thank him for all the work he has done in exposing cults and as a cult exit counselor. This new information, combined with what I learned from Margaret and Janja, had given me a small measure of peace. He, too, played a large role in saving my life. This role was soon to expand greatly. I did not know what to do next.

How was I supposed to tell Patty the “good news” that we have been in a cult for almost a decade? I knew it all sounded strange, even though I knew it was true. I felt so stupid. People left cults broken, destitute, and in silence. They were like the rape victims who would rather go away quietly than have everyone know about the violation. Worse yet was the condemning stigma that their own actions might have caused the rape in the first place. Cult victims often carry the same burden of judgment for their own victimization.

²¹ Ibid., page 30

The Truth Will Set You Free

*"The similarity between Amway and the Moonies is so profound that one wonders if the two are in cahoots. Maybe at the top of the ladder they scratch each other's backs."**

— Stephen Butterfield

What a wonderful surprise when Mr. Hassan called me from his office in Boston. He insisted I call him Steve. He is a kind and gentle man. He was glad his efforts had helped me, and we talked at length about the similarities of our cult experiences. His call was a very kind gesture, after all Patty and I had endured. I promised to keep in touch and let Steve know how we were doing. I also kept in touch with Ashley Wilkes, and that seemed to help. I felt so badly for Patty as she had almost no one to talk to and was alone in her experience. Her only way of surviving this was to simply shut down emotionally. I had to let her find her own way. She had been told who to be, what to do, what to feel, and how to think for too long. It broke my heart not to be able to help her. I agonized for her as she suffered silently, alone with her thoughts.

Amway continued to financially starve the life from us. One month went by with no income, then two, then three and four. We lost our medical insurance. We were going to lose the house soon. Friends fed us and brought groceries over to our house. We still were conditioned not to "pass negative" and told almost no one how bad our situation was becoming. I mentioned to Steve the problems Patty and I were experiencing with regard to open communication after having followed the "never pass negative Cardinal Rule" for so long. He had heard that the Moonies had a nearly identical principle called "Multiplication of The Evils." If you repeated negative information, which was of course inherently evil, you had multiplied the evil. Those were nearly identical techniques that effectively suppressed the communication of any beliefs or information contrary to the cults' doctrines.

At one time, I had held our little church in contempt, as more people "came to the Lord" at Amway distributor seminar services than in the church. Guess who came to our aid when we were down and out? Our precious little church — which provided us with a check that bought us food for over a month. I had been led to believe Patty's parents and my four parents were all naïve people. We had been warned not to take advice from them or other well-meaning people. They all came to our aid with financial assistance.

* Butterfield, Stephen, *Amway: The Cult of Free Enterprise*, Copyright 1985, page 149

My mother and her husband had almost nothing financially, but, in a visit to our home, they made us a loan that kept our home from going to tax sale. We were overwhelmed at their kindness and will be forever grateful for their compassion. Patty's parents also loaned us large sums of money to help out. They were so kind. I felt as if I had let them down terribly. They had trusted me with their beautiful daughter, and I was so ashamed of the pathetic life I had given her.

My faith in God was being restored. I quickly came to believe that perhaps God had been there all along and that He is a God of new beginnings — even when we desert Him. He is a constant protector and an unconditional God who loves us and keeps His promises. He is certainly not the God of success that was used to promote Amway. People who had lost thousands of dollars in Amway and who had quit The Business helped us with gifts of meat for our freezer. We received anonymous cash in the mail that seemed to come when there was nothing much left in the refrigerator.

One Silver Direct couple, Taylor and Suzanne, who had lost well over \$10,000 on their Amway business, traded in jewelry and a small sailboat as a down payment for a used car when ours died. They had nothing, yet they gave what they had after we had helped lead them to financial slaughter. We were overwhelmed with gratitude and the contrasting goodness in these people. Ashley Wilkes, who was broke after having exhausted his funds for his Amway legal bills, took a cash advance on a credit card and sent us \$300 to buy food with. I cried when it came. We had never even met in person. He became a true brother to me and we referred to each as “Bro” in most of our communications. The goodness of humanity was burned upon my heart.

Even with all the generosity from others, we still were completely destitute, had no jobs, no medical insurance, and were losing our home. Amway was a wonderful business, wasn't it?

Now, picture yourself in our shoes for a minute. I am not an author, but a regular person just like you — with the desire to take care of my family. Imagine not knowing where food money is going to come from. Our cupboards were nearly bare and my beautiful wife and three children were looking to me for protection and support. Old cars, which were barely safe, were in our driveway. Foreclosure loomed ahead and bankruptcy had already been declared. Money was owed to nearly everyone we knew and loved. All we had to do was “sell” The Business and, most likely, sign a lengthy non-disclosure/secretary agreement, and all our financial problems would go away. Better yet, we could go into binding arbitration with the BSMAA agreement we were blackmailed into signing. There most likely would be an enormous check, based upon all the extensive documentation of abuse, fraud, and misrepresentation we had collected. All we had to do was agree to never speak of it again.

How much would your silence be worth? Could you rescue your family from a burning building and walk away while many others, unaware of the danger, burned to death? What if it was a big check, **I mean lots of money?** How much would it take to drown out the screams? “Make it easy on yourself, pal. Your wife and kids need you to take care of them. Just walk away. Take the deal!” I heard that voice again and again. No book ever written on Amway had ever made it to serious publication. Was I a fool to believe I could make a difference? Just take the money.

That was precisely what nearly every person we knew and loved advised us to do. Just walk away. We could not. **I would not!** If someone had stood up years ago and

exposed these problems, we would have had a different life. The entire situation was a slow torture. Amway and our upline were, and still are, very good at what they do.

At this point, Amway surpassed the threshold of merely pretending to look the other way in reference to its own kingpin distributors' activities. They have apparently become willing accomplices to the deception of the tool and seminar business. Second generation DeVos and Van Andel family members now manage Amway on a day-to-day basis in executive positions. The very same people, who publicly sing the praises of Amway, free enterprise, and entrepreneurship, are now beginning to speak at Yager and Walters seminars. They have chosen to be part of the cultish system which has cut a path of personal and financial destruction across the nation and around the world. Their messages normally center on capitalism, free enterprise, faith, patriotism, and personal business ownership. The very system they are part of, in and of itself, creates a caste system whose results far closer resemble socialism or communism. The rich (Amway Diamonds and the DeVos and Van Andel families) get richer and the poor (distributor force) get poorer, as more and more "positive" products and "creative tools" drain their resources. Many of the fortunes of the super-rich Diamond-level distributors were culled from the financial losses of their loving, trusting flock. The more the group lost financially in money to support *the system*, the richer they became. The wealthier they became, the more cars, homes, jets, and yachts they purchased. The more luxuries they possessed, the more people were recruited into Amway, based upon this illusion of their success in the Amway business.

How much of the Amway Diamonds' income is derived from *the system* versus Amway income? I was afraid it could be as much as 70% or higher. I was way off the mark. A powerfully revealing book was released in 1999 entitled *Amway Motivational Organizations: Behind the Smoke and Mirrors* by Ruth Carter. It documented what I had thought to be true. Its contents were truly shocking. She and her husband had been Amway distributors, and she worked in the office of a Yager Diamond couple for years. She does not name them, but, from her description, I immediately recognized them as Diamonds we had worked with in the past. After years of working in the Yager Diamond's office, she began to experience the same gut-wrenching feelings that I had. Something was wrong and she could smell it. She discovered many of the same problems, but she went one step further. She published the Diamonds' tax return figures for 1996. I believe the publication of these numbers will lead to the prosecution of many Diamonds for fraud or statutes involving theft by deception.

In 1996, their total gross income was \$2,923,000¹. This includes massive sums from tool sales, seminars ticket sales, and speaking fees. The gross amount of the commissions they made from Amway that entire year was.....\$130,000! This is only 4.447% of their income. This is an outrage. It gets worse. If they did not have the tool income and maintained the same level of expenses from their Amway business, they would lose nearly \$250,000 a year! After all the badgering about "be a man" and "succeed," etc., here's an Amway Diamond, allegedly at the pinnacle of success, who might *lose* \$20,000 a month if he only had Amway money. That's certainly the only money the bulk of his distributors have to live on. This is pathetic. We were sold on the critical nature of *the system* and its "100% success rate" in generating Amway income, when, in reality, it was the *sales of system tools* that produced nearly 100% of the

¹ *Amway Motivational Organizations: Behind the Smoke and Mirrors*, Ruth Carter, Copyright 1999

Diamond's income. Zack may even have a higher percentage than this one. A Direct of his who recently dropped out told me Zack has a secret taping facility in his warehouse and makes his own tapes, cutting out Dexter.

The Man in My Mirror

*"He's the greatest person I've ever known. When I look at him... I see JESUS. I want you to listen to him. I know that you'll see Jesus, too."***

— Mike Wallace, quoting Birdie Yager describing her husband, Dexter Yager

I was quickly plummeting into the darkness again. A growing terror was gaining momentum within me. I did not know how to kill the beast when it came from within *me*. It was so incredibly frustrating because I had been getting better for almost five days. I had thought I was recovering. We naïvely thought we had our freedom when we walked away from what we now knew was clearly a cult. But, we were still as much prisoners at that moment as when our upline was manipulating us.

The straw that broke the camel's back was about to come. Patty could see I was rapidly headed downhill psychologically again, but I was unaware of it. It was the 4th of July at about 10 p.m. Under Patty's supervision, Adam decided to go out and light off a few small fireworks in our backyard. I went to the front yard with our family dog, a playful black Lab. We were in the front yard in the dark when I heard something or someone moving rapidly in the woods across the street.

Nothing should be over there. I dove behind my parked car in our driveway and pulled the dog close to silence him. Whatever it was, it was coming closer and closer. The dog struggled and I pummeled him with my fist to silence him. I did not want any sound to give away our location. The dog struggled more and I twisted his collar as hard as I could to cut off his air supply. I almost killed him. My heart was pounding violently. The death threat, the questions about the murdered child in Texas, and a dozen different scenarios all raced through my mind. What I had feared was finally here. A car came down the road and acted as a brief barrier between me and whatever "it" was! I dragged the dog as I raced around the house to the back yard. I was screaming, ***"Get in the house! Get in the house! Get in the house!"***

Terror stricken, Patty and the kids ran in the house. I rushed them back to the bedroom and turned off all the lights in the house. I slid a shotgun shell into the chamber and sat in the dark. We all huddled in our bedroom for quite some time. The kids were crying. Patty was scared. After what seemed like an eternity, Patty and I ventured out into our darkened living room and peered into the woods. They were now silent. Our hearts were racing. We both looked for "*it*" or "*them*," but we saw nothing. Part of me knew that

** Birdie Yager, 60 Minutes taping of Free Enterprise Day Seminar, Labor Day weekend 1983

my reaction might not have been an appropriate response, and part of me knew I did the right thing. What had happened to me? I used to hang glide, skydive, rock climb, and rappel down cliff faces. Now, I was terrified of things that went bump in the night? I needed some help. The enemy was both strong and relentless. We were in a daily war for survival. This could not really be happening. How long could this go on? How long could we go on? I was really at a point where I felt I could not make it through another day. Knowing more of the truth did not help. I was losing my will to continue.

This was another turning point for me. After thinking about the behavior I displayed in front of my wife and children, I realized that I needed some professional help. I will never know what kind of creature was racing along the stream that night, but it certainly brought me to the conclusion that enough was enough. I needed to make some changes.

Throw Out the Life Preserver

"About the only limit I like to accept in the Amway business is that every person in the world will be involved with it someday. And, until God says there are people on other planets, I will accept that limit."*

— Doug DeVos, Head of Amway North American Operations

I had kept in touch with Steve Hassan by telephone and e-mail. He would occasionally call or send an e-mail to see how Patty and I were doing. We developed a friendship that had great meaning to me. He was one of the few people on earth who seemed to understand what was happening to Patty and me. I trusted almost no one at this point and had done my homework on him. He was a best-selling author and had a Master's degree in counseling psychology from Cambridge College. He had been on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *60 Minutes*, *Dateline*, *Good Morning America*, and many other television shows. To be honest, none of that carried much weight with me, as I had just succumbed to people who appeared superficially to "have it all together." The reason I trusted him was that he had been described as formerly being a cult leader in the Unification Church. He must have some idea of what I was going through. Mr. Hassan's web site contained a wealth of information about cults. Perhaps, he could help me understand what I was going through.

I called Steve in complete desperation. I explained the 4th of July commando raid and other challenges we were facing. He agreed to see me the following week. Patty and I had a knockdown, drag-em-out argument, as she saw I was getting worse and worse the more I learned about Amway, *the system*, the deception, and the cultism. I could not give this up. Exposing Amway and stopping the abuse seemed to be my only salvation. Patty didn't see it the same way and said she would not live like that any longer. I think she

* *Amway Special Guests Speakers D. DeVos, B. Kerkstra* audiotape, GDL 96-21, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

secretly feared I was going crazy if I thought I needed to see a cult exit counselor. It just sounded so far out to her.

I traveled early the next morning to Steve Hassan's office in Boston. I had mixed feelings, even some fearful ones. I did not want anyone probing my mind. My palms were sweaty and my heart pounded forcefully as I parked in front of his nondescript office in Boston. As I rang the buzzer, panic struck and I was suddenly as afraid of him as the cult that was trying to destroy me.

He greeted me warmly. His friendly low-key manner helped me get my bearings while he showed me around his office, even pointing out pictures of his family and friends on his refrigerator. We talked very casually, and he let me lead most of the conversation. His mannerisms were non-threatening; he seemed to know instinctively what I was feeling emotionally.

I felt I needed psychological surgery to rewire myself to think and feel the way I did before entering Amway. I shared these feelings with him and added that I was "fearful of handing him the scalpel." He laughed and told me to "put the scalpel away," because there would be no use for it. We spent most of the day discussing the similarities of our cult experiences. I was amazed how nearly identical the Moonies were in their practices to what Patty and I had experienced as Amway distributors. Steve and I watched several videos about cults that he had in his office. To my surprise, he then produced an old tape of *60 Minutes* from the early 1980s that exposed Amway for employing many of the same cultic practices he revealed in his book.

I was a sponge, and Steve had a literal fountain of knowledge and experience to share. His professionalism and kind manner helped me feel more comfortable. I had not been sure what to expect, but I learned many things from him. He explained there are many different types of cults. There are religious, political, financial, self-improvement, UFO, and other types as well. There are even churches that have crossed the line and become cults. As different as they all are, most have certain defining characteristics that lump them into the category of a cult. I was stunned as nearly all the characteristics he described were evident in techniques that were used to recruit, control, and manipulate us until they almost destroyed us.

"We are going to control the world influences because of this business."*

— Jeff Yager (son of Dexter and Birdie)

In a cult, Steve explained, you are recruited through deception. The word "recruited" is vital. Most people do not *join* cults. They are targeted and recruited by members. As Amway distributors, we had been instructed to join any activity where we could meet and recruit new distributors. These people thought they were just meeting a nice couple with whom they would want to become friends. All the time, we were developing a relationship and gathering information to recruit them.

* GDL 97-29 audiotape, *Tues. Evening*, Copyright InterNET Services Corporation

Few would get involved in a cult or cult activity if made aware of the ultimate purpose of their involvement. This was usually handled by having different tiers of knowledge available to members. We would not think of giving Dexter's tapes to new distributors, because the messages were "too advanced." Similarly, as an active "Moonie" recruiter, Steve would not have exposed new recruits to high-level teachings of Reverend Moon. (Many of his followers believed that he was ten thousand times greater than Jesus Christ and the father of all mankind.) We had both used the *identical* phrase of "you don't feed steak to a baby" to justify not revealing all levels of the teachings of our leaders to new recruits.

A technique called "love bombing" normally occurs during the recruitment phase of cult indoctrination. Members of the group edify the recruits with great sincerity by telling them how sharp they are and what potential they have. Notice this is not some miscreant dancing in a sheet on the street who lavishes people with praise. You'd know to stay away from him.

A cult member today is more apt to dress in a suit or in good casual clothing. I had pictured someone in a cult as a weak-minded person, living in a commune, and submitting to a powerful leader. The most successful cult leaders will often be intelligent, very likeable, and have charismatic personalities. My paradigm of destructive mind control or thought reform was something that must have come from a movie in the 1960s. I had pictured Chinese water torture and solitary confinement.

"I just wish I could crack your brain open, reach in there and yank all the crap the world has put on you, and give you a brand-new brain with no hurts, no pain and no negative crap."*

— Amway Crown Ambassador Dexter Yager

Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. One of the most important factors for effective thought reform (which is a form of brain washing as recruits are pulled deeper and deeper into the cult) is that the person being reformed must be completely unaware of it. We all have the same knee-jerk reaction and think, "It wouldn't happen to me, because I am too smart to let that happen."

Steve continued my education by explaining that, once the cult had control over a member, they may very quickly drain off all the recruit's financial resources. Additionally, almost all of the member's time would be dominated by recruitment or fund raising for the group — usually to the point of exhaustion.

Both Steve and I had worked beyond the threshold of exhaustion to the point of hallucinating. He asked what helped me to decide to come out of Amway, and when I had begun to think clearly. I told him about the *Leeza* show and the gentleman from the Heaven's Gate cult. Steve then said, "That's Dick Joslyn...He's a client of mine. Would you like to talk to him?" Steve had counseled Dick after many of his friends had committed suicide at the Heaven's Gate compound.

* Dexter Yager, *Charge!* audiotape, Stock No. YNMI-12, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

I called Dick and introduced myself and was totally overcome with thankfulness as I explained to him the impact he had on my life. That was an emotional conversation. Steve later explained that, from an insider's perspective, there was no legitimate reason ever to leave a cult. This explains not only why it is so difficult for members to leave, but also why their character is immediately assassinated.

The day had sped by, so we made plans to meet the following morning. I was exhilarated. I felt an incredible sense of relief to know what had really happened to us. For the first time, I began to feel as though I would be able to return from the darkness. I felt normal human emotions for the first time in years.

With new energy and excitement, I went back to my father's house and told him and his wife, Kelly, that I was making tremendous progress. The fact that I was seeing a cult exit counselor must have sounded crazy to them, but I had to share this good news. I left early the next morning and returned to Steve's office in Boston. I stopped and ate at a Kentucky Fried Chicken and savored the food. My senses, which had been completely subdued, seemed to be returning. Even the sky seemed a brighter shade of blue.

At the office, I excitedly told Steve how much better I was feeling. He was very calm about it. He asked many questions that did not challenge me, but helped me think through my current belief set(s). He explained that cults often utilize phobia-building techniques to keep their members fearful from ever leaving. We had heard countless horror stories during our Amway years about distributors who had left and then gone totally downhill. After several years, I had been so thoroughly indoctrinated I believed there was no happiness, success, or any way to fulfill God's call in my life except by building the Amway business. Additionally, everything that was pro-Amway was of God and anything else was of Satan. Was this type of indoctrination an isolated incident? Certainly not, and Amway is very much aware of it. In 1985, *Amway: The Cult of Free Enterprise* was published. This book revealed that the same techniques and deceptions used upon hundreds of thousands of distributors in the 1990s were being utilized as early as the 1980s. The book exposed it clearly and stated:

God is Positive, and the Devil is Negative. The Devil wants people to have jobs and worry about money and be under financial pressure... people out there are praying the Lord will show them a way out. And you know what? This business is the answer to those prayers.²

Did Amway knowingly look the other way when a book was published that exposed cult techniques being perpetrated upon Amway's own loyal distributor force? Were the DeVos and Van Andel families, who owned and managed Amway, aware of these abuses? There appears to be little room for doubt. In 1985, *Forbes* did an article on Amway that revealed:

Last year DeVos and Van Andel brought in William Nicholson, former president Gerald Ford's appointments secretary, to reorganize Amway. Nicholson says the firm is cleansing the sales force, and there is a

² *Amway: The Cult of Free Enterprise*, Stephen Butterfield, Copyright 1985

new approach, downplaying evangelism and cultism and emphasizing real sales training instead.³

How outrageous! “Downplaying” cultism?!!! Isn’t that like downplaying the raping of nuns or the murder of children? This is reprehensible! It appears obvious that this “downplaying” of known cultism never took place. From a liability standpoint, this could be crushing to Amway, as senior management acknowledged “cultism” in Amway; yet the corporation allowed, if not encouraged, the offending distributors to flourish.

Additionally damaging, in the same article, were the comments of Amway-insider Don Gregory, Van Andel’s former speechwriter. From his inside perspective, he stated, “Recruits are brainwashed into spending a fortune on peripherals while consuming Amway products.”⁴

“Brainwashed” seems to be an accurate description. Why would Amway allow this abuse to continue? The answer seems to be quite simple. One of the key cult-like teachings of the huge motivational organizations (which allegedly control most all of Amway’s volume) is the hyper-consumption of Amway or Amway-marketed products.

One key point Steve covered with me is why people in cults are regarded as fools or weak minded, and why so many leave in silence. He refers to it as the “illusion of choice.” In your mind, in the recruitment and indoctrination phase, you feel as if you are making certain choices which will enhance your life. In reality, your paradigms or belief sets have been slowly changed, and you are being led down a specific, pre-ordained path. Distributors have the *illusion* that they are **choosing** to get on the tape-of-the-week and book-and-video-of-the-month programs. They have the *illusion* that they are **choosing** to spend a great deal of money and weekends away from their children to invest in themselves. From the moment they were sponsored, their environment and social contacts within the group were shaped and molded to make these “choices” their only option if they truly loved their family and wanted to succeed. When distributors leave the group emotionally and financially broken, they are cast off as weak and become “losers” to those who had allegedly loved them like family when they were buying tapes.

My meeting with Steve was going very well until he asked me one final question. Essentially, he told me that I had both my freedom and my life back and asked what I had to look forward to. With little or no expression, I told him, “**Nothing.**” I knew it was illogical, but that was how I felt. He explained that my perception was normal and that former cult members had to go through a grieving process for several reasons.

First, they feel as if they have lost their God-ordained, great commission in life. They seem to feel adrift without this great, driving purpose. Second, they often feel survivor’s guilt, as they think about those people they recruited, loved, and left behind. Everything, in terms of your thoughts, is simply black and white in a cult. Your entire life is pre-ordained. There are few real decisions to make. To suddenly become free and stare into the vast expanse of your future is not yet liberating. It is like staring into a deep, bottomless chasm. He warned me that it might be at least a full year before I would begin to feel like myself. I naïvely thought he did not know how great I was really feeling at that moment.

³ *Forbes*, March 25, 1985, “Cleaning Up?” Richard Behar

⁴ *Ibid.*

***"I just want to crawl inside your brain and clean it
up..."****

— Amway Crown Ambassador Birdie Yager

From the monthly magazine for Amway distributors called the Amagram:

"Sponsors have seen some distributors change character so completely they hardly recognize the "new" person. Not really "new," of course. The person is the same. But now his "negative space" has been replaced with positive accomplishment and appreciation. For him, it's a whole new world. The World of Amway."⁵

* Birdie Yager, *Ladies Session Saturday Morning Part II* audiotape, Stock No. GDL 96-2

⁵ *Amagram*, March 1998, "From the Policy Board" p.4

It's a Small World After All

*"I'm going to tell you something based upon what I've learned from my life, the ones of us that accept Christ and we carry this banner of Amway and we go with it, we're the Christian soldiers marching as to war. We're the anointed. Read the 91st Psalm."**

— Amway Crown Ambassador Dexter Yager

It would not be very long until a good friend named Jim dropped out of the group and made contact with me. Jim was a Philadelphia police officer when he was recruited to become an Amway distributor in our organization. He had lost his home while proudly staying on tape-of-the-week and paying for all the seminars. He had almost assaulted his elderly father in front of his children on Easter while defending the Amway business and its virtuous leaders. He wanted me to explain to him how this happened and I began to explain what I knew to be true. Reconnecting with friends like this gave me some strength. Jim was not alone, by any means, in suffering large financial losses.

Many, many business-savvy individuals have lost out to Amway or its related motivational organizations. The MLMsurvivor.com web site, run by author Ruth Carter, made this comment regarding two CPAs public:

“Claiming business losses of nearly \$25,000 annually over eight years, Kenneth J. Nissley and Terri C. Connor-Nissley are Amway distributors in Indianapolis. They are both Certified Public Accountants (CPAs), and both have worked for a number of years for the prestigious “Big Five” firm of Price Waterhouse. You would think that their professional credibility and business acumen would help them to become “successful” in Amway. You would be wrong. Following upline advice, instead of accepted business standards and practices, has proven very expensive for them. In addition to business losses of more than \$187,000 in eight years, the Nissleys have just been denied three year’s worth of tax write-offs.

The Nissley’s Amway business losses have been quite significant. With about 75 distributors in their group during each of the three years (which should put them at or near the Direct Distributor/Platinum level),

* *Dex Tuesday Evening Part II* audiotape, Stock No. GDL 96-40, Copyright Internet Services Corporation

they claimed losses of \$27,407 in 1994; \$33,539 in 1995; and \$27,787 in 1996. The tax court looked at their profit/loss for each year of their Amway involvement. Between 1991 and 1999, the couple lost a total of \$187,754, or an average of almost \$25,000 annually.”

Amway and its motivational groups would like you to believe that these are isolated incidents. The sad truth is quite the opposite. Most everyone in our organization lost money. The only question is how much. Paradoxically, some of the distributors who lost the very most were the ones who were the most loyal to *the system* of “success.” Some of our Direct Distributors are tens of thousands of dollars in debt after getting in Amway, buying its often expensive products and committing completely to *the system* that claims to have a “100% success rate.” We had been sold the belief set that only broke people would keep shopping at Wal-Mart, helping Sam Walton’s family get wealthier.

After our exodus from Amway, Patty and I were shocked when we started shopping at Wal-Mart. We found a large savings overall, but, in many cases, we could purchase similar products there for one-third to one-half the price we were “paying wholesale for” through *our* Amway business for the same type of consumer goods.

I learned of a man named Bruce Craig. He served as the Assistant Attorney General of the state of Wisconsin for 30 years until his retirement in 1997, at which point he went into private practice. While acting as the Assistant Attorney General, he prosecuted pyramid cases, including what he describes as “extensive litigation” against Amway in the early 1980s for income misrepresentations. In the discovery process of this litigation, distributors’ tax returns revealed that the top 1% of Amway distributors in his state (Direct Distributors) had net annual incomes of “minus \$900.”* *The system* and its related costs have grown dramatically since then. The income figures could actually be worse now.

Why is Bruce Craig a relevant player in this drama? He has submitted a letter to Robert Pitofsky, Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, requesting that the commission revisit its 1979 decision declaring that Amway was not an illegal pyramid. That decision was based, at least in part, on the appearance of there being certain safety rules in place to protect distributors. These rules, specifically the retail sales rule, seem to have been all but completely ignored by Amway. In light of this, Mr. Craig made this remark in his petition to the FTC:

“Since investments in pyramid type offerings have resulted in billions of dollars in losses over the years, I believe it critical that the Commission, initially, determines whether in fact Amway currently enforces its rules to the extent that they produce the results the Commission anticipated in its decision.”

Billions of dollars is a significant sum. I had believed Amway was used as a front company for the motivational organizations to siphon off *well over* a billion dollars from its loyal distributor force. This seems to confirm that estimation. Through a secretive Internet contact, the message was delivered that I would be willing to provide insider

* Letter from Bruce A. Craig to FTC Chairman Pitofsky requesting re-opening of Investigation of Amway

information, documentation, and testimony to the Federal Trade Commission. Mr. Craig called my home a few days later and I told him what I had in terms of documentation. I sent off a large Federal Express box to Chairman Pitofsky, full of documentation and a letter expressing my willingness to testify despite an active death threat. I received confirmation from FedEx that it was delivered, but I never heard from Mr. Pitofsky or his staff. It's getting harder to tell who the good guys are.

Who will take care of this before I am killed or my evidence is stolen and destroyed? I have made multiple copies of everything and hidden the originals off site and out of state, after being advised by an attorney that I "could have a house fire" very easily. The pressure is continually mounting, and nearly everyone who knows us wants me to just walk away. I wish I *could* walk away at times, but this is too evil to let go on.

I was a tired, nearly broken man. I could not stop, but did not know how I could go on. Once again, I felt like I was falling apart psychologically. My nightmares were becoming more vivid. I felt as if I could not go to sleep one more time to die a hideous death in the contorted realm of my dreams. I could not bear to see Patty or the kids hurt, maimed, or killed in yet another nocturnal no-way-out scenario. One night, I dreamed we were living in hiding like Anne Frank. A group of soldiers discovered us and dragged Patty and my beautiful daughters from me and into a home for their own pleasure. I exploded into consciousness — heart pounding, sweating, and panting to the sounds of their screams for help. I was again powerless to help them. I lived in a state of agonizing daily powerlessness. Days were hell. Nights were hell. It was all getting worse and I was falling apart one day at a time. I could not get a professional job, so I took work that paid near the minimum wage. I shoveled tons of ears of corn inside huge drying bins. I was willing to do almost anything at that point. It was hard to imagine I once had a career in the corporate world, a retirement account, rental properties, peace of mind, and time with my family. All that had changed for me.

The job shoveling corn in drying bins was strenuous and caused physical discomfort as I breathed large amounts of dust. I would cough up black chunks of this dust at the supper table. I came home filthy and always looked forward to a cool shower. At night, my eyes fused shut from the large amount of dust that had collected in them during the day. On the other hand, it was healthy, as I was learning there is no shame in a J-O-B, no matter what you do to provide for your family. The job involved a good deal of solitary time and allowed me to begin to deprogram.

Amway continued with what appears to be an ongoing campaign to financially destroy anyone who dares speak against them. Their external "legal team" began to seek depositions and other information from web site owners Sidney Schwartz, John Hoagland, Dave Midgett, and Ruth Carter. They have attempted to obtain access to the entire contents of these people's hard drives. In some instances, they have actually been granted access, and mirror-image copies are made for Amway's legal team to review. This is terrifying to all of us who are now exposed to even greater risk by having Amway know our names and contacts. On these hard drives are e-mails from many seeking help who have been harmed by their participation in Amway. Sidney deleted many of these, but unknown to him, his computer continued to store them in "unused memory" on his hard drive, and Amway got them. I began using a program which does a high-level government encryption wipe of the free space on my hard drive to assure that the

information and communications I delete are destroyed. This is like a George Orwell story we're all trapped in.

"Big Brother" is powerful, alive, and well. One soldier after another falls from the financial pressure of mounting legal bills. Sidney Schwartz and Ashley Wilkes were each forced for financial reasons to remove their web sites from public view. The MLMsurvivor.com web site run by Ruth Carter was pummeled, but is still up. Ruth has been subpoenaed by Amway four separate times for lawsuits she is a non-party to. This was done by Amway's attorney, Norbert Kugele. He is very good at what he does. In every case, Norbert or Amway dropped the request at the last moment and never even got a deposition. To fight these legal actions, she and her husband ran up nearly \$15,000 in legal fees. Freedom of speech is anything *but* free. I do not understand how they can keep going, but I admire her courage and commitment to the victims of Amway and its motivational organizations. You have the right to free speech in America, but God help you if you use that right to speak against Amway. More and more sites have been shut down. I'm sure my number is coming up, too, as I have been in close contact with some of these people. My name and e-mails are on their computers. The pressure is immense.

Now, people searching online for information about Amway are bombarded with an enormous number of pro-Amway pages put on the web in an apparent effort to combat the publication of this "negative information."

I began to drink again at night, on occasion, to drown out the hell of my life and the shame I felt for my family's living conditions. It seemed as if there was no end. Just when it appeared we would hit rock bottom, we would fall deeper. Our torment must have brought Amway and our upline delight, because they would not let up and continued to apply more pressure.

Patty and I both landed professional jobs at nearly the same time — she in the front office for a local pediatrician and I in the marketing department of a family-owned business. It was agonizing to try and find our place in this now foreign world. We did not know how to make basic conversations with people outside of "the group." Fear gripped us both, like children on the opening day of first grade. Financially, it was too little too late to save our home. Fighting my depression and cult withdrawal was an all-consuming, enormous, daily struggle for me. I never knew what my emotions would be from day to day. I would be healthy for three or four days straight and my spirits would be lifted, then I would crash again, haunted by the lives of those I recruited who are still in the cult.

I had been the social leader and Patty had been a little shy and slower to meet people, but the tables had turned. She had counted on me to handle social situations in the past, but now I followed her like a new puppy. I rarely spoke in social settings. We would run into people we knew and I would stand by her side or behind her and not say a word. We had new neighbors move in and I just sat inside and watched them for months. The thought of any prolonged conversation or social interaction terrified me.

The pressure was really on as we got closer to losing the house. We were amazed they were going to push it this far. Didn't Amway have any sense of damage control? It looked as if they were going to randomly enforce a rule as punishment, but not apply the same rule to Dexter, Zack, and all their other leaders who had not spoken out against fraud and deception in the distributor ranks. As the pressure intensified, I relented and agreed to Amway's informal conciliation process, but made it clear it was not a request for, nor did I have any interest in, binding arbitration. We needed to get our bonus money

out of escrow fast if we were to save our home. We were also very much afraid one of our children could get hurt, and we did not have any medical insurance.

The first meeting was scheduled by Dan Bailey of Amway Rules and Conduct, but I was later informed that neither Zack nor Kerry could attend on that date. That seemed odd, as I had listened to them both talk about having “no schedule” and “six Saturdays and a Sunday” for the last nine years. The meeting was rescheduled at a later date and I became increasingly more anxious.

I was told one person would mediate the conciliation and he would essentially pass judgment on my situation. If I didn’t like the results, then I could go into arbitration.... I don’t *think* so. I learned that Crown Direct Jody Victor was to act as Judge and Jury. This was incredible. He and Zack had been friends for close to two decades. Not only that, they had been paying each other large speaking fees to speak to one another’s groups. Jody would come in to speak for us and, about six months later, a tape of the speech was sold as a tape-of-the-week to all the distributors.

I exposed massive fraud and deception in the tool business from which Zack and Jody apparently derived nearly all their Amway-related income. They were long-term acquaintances, if not good friends, who benefited financially from each other and common deceptive business practices. Now Jody was going to sit down and impartially mediate a dispute between us? To call this a pathetic farce gives it far more credibility than it merited. This was beginning to smell more and more rotten as it aged. It seems clear that Amway was rotten to the very core.

If I hadn’t already felt like vomiting, I would have laughed when I later learned that Zack served on the Legal and Ethics Committee of the IBOA (Independent Business Owners Association) International Board — formerly the ADA (Amway Distributors Association) Board. It got better... Jody Victor was the Chairman of the Committee.¹ What a twisted, contorted perversion of everything on earth that was promoted as good and honorable. I cancelled the meeting for reasons which are quite evident.

The Tables Turned

I was beginning to feel a little better when the events of the past year finally got to Patty. She had carried the kids, herself, and me through everything. I had been so completely absorbed in just surviving each day that I had no comprehension of the hell she had lived through. She had watched me time and time again go to the swimming hole with a cigar, a beer, and my loaded gun, never knowing if I would return. The toll on her had been enormous.

She succumbed to the darkest depression I have ever seen. It only took about three days to totally consume her. Her once-radiant eyes were sunken and lifeless. She was exhausted constantly. We had both cried so much we no longer had tears. We were totally spent. There was nothing left inside either of us. At times, she climbed into bed at 4 p.m. and slept the rest of the day and all night. My dear, sweet Patty was dying from the inside

¹ *Achieve* magazine, July, 2000 p. 25

out and there was nothing I could do. Our upline was robbing her of her will to live. She withdrew not only from me, but also from the children she loved more than life itself.

Patty retreated into a quiet world of darkness and I was powerless to comfort her. This was the point where I was supposed to get tough and pull myself together to be the solid rock she needed. I tried with all my might, but I, too, was falling apart at the seams. Patty was unable to take care of the children when she got home from work and needed help. The family-owned company I worked for had a couple hundred employees to worry about, but I met with Johnny and Juanita (the owners), broke down, and told them I was losing my family. I worked for their daughter, Rachael. They prayed with me, for my family, and for Patty's healing. Not only that, the three of them got together and changed all my responsibilities and my work schedule, allowing me to come in and leave an hour and a half early in order to spend time with the kids and to help Patty. They also provided me with books to help attempt to piece our relationship together. I had seen the very worst in human nature, but, from them, I saw the best. I was surrounded by new friends who encouraged and uplifted me daily. It helped me greatly, but it did not help Patty. She was alone and falling deeper into the abyss.

This beast of the darkness had her in its teeth. She was going from bad to worse. Watching her further succumb was hell. It was like watching her burn to death and being unable to put out the fire. I had always been able to protect her. I felt useless and could do nothing as the cancer of depression ate at her soul. I could put on a game face at work and function effectively, but fell apart in my car on the way home. I lay awake next to Patty night after night; there were no words that brought her comfort. I put my hand on her back and prayed for her healing night after night, but it did not come.

I realized I had brought all of this upon her. I thought if I could go back in time to the day we met, I might have avoided Patty to spare her the living hell that had become her life. Being with me was like having hot coals heaped upon her day after day. I believed I was no longer capable of even the most mundane acts as a husband or father.

I began thinking thoughts like, "They would all be better off without me." I could not bring any more pain or disappointment into their lives. I prayed for death, but that did not come. *I* was the target that needed to be silenced by the powers of Amway. I could no longer place my family in the line of fire. Suicide was not an option, so I decided I would have to leave them for their own good and their safety. This was the same terrible decision my own father had to make many years ago. Patty is my soul mate and the woman of my dreams. I have never met another person as good or as kind as she is. It tore my heart out as I realized I needed to leave her and the children I loved more than life itself for their own good. Now I understood what my father had had to do.

I left Patty a letter telling her of my decision and enclosed my wedding band in it. My heart was broken as I drove to work. Amway and its related cult had won. They had taken or destroyed all I valued in this life. I was completely destroyed spiritually, emotionally, and financially. Patty called me at work and asked me if I really wanted to end our relationship. We were both completely numb and emotionless. Of course, I didn't *want* to do that, but I couldn't stop the insanity in our lives any other way. We spoke like robots. We were completely drained and could cry no more. There was not much left within either of us, but we did agree to talk after work.

Thank God, somehow we decided we could pull through this — *together*. We had no idea how we were going to do that. I wrote Dick DeVos another letter and begged him

to release our funds to save our home. He did not respond. Our bank told us they had stalled the foreclosure process four months beyond when they should have taken action, because they knew the situation. They felt bad, because we were long-time customers and had perfect credit ratings before Amway. The account had to be turned over to their attorneys for processing. I understood they had to take that action. The pressure was mounting. I did not know how we were going to tell the kids we were losing the home. They had grown up in the house. They had played with their dog in the yard. I could not bear the thought of telling them.

On the way home from work one day, I began to experience pressure on the left side of my chest. I ignored it at first, because it seemed minor. We were sitting down for dinner when the pains became sharp and frequent. I knew what was happening to me. There was a very real pain coursing through my chest. I was sure I must be having a heart attack. I pulled Patty out of the kitchen and told her not to worry, but I was going to the hospital to have it checked out. When I arrived at the hospital emergency room, I was soon strapped to all kinds of machines and monitors. I did not want to die now. I wanted to live. Patty soon arrived and waited by my bedside. She had always been by my side. I loved her so much; she did not deserve this. The pastor (the one I almost attacked) came to be with us. He was a good man and a true friend. I felt overwhelmed by the mess our lives had become.

After many tests, it turned out I had pleurisy, which was described to me as an infection or irritation of the sac surrounding the lungs. What a relief! But, I knew I had to end the stress before it literally killed one or both of us.

I sent a fax to both Amway and my sponsor, Kerry. I told them I had digital copies made of photographs of myself with Rich DeVos, Dexter Yager, Zack and Molly, Oliver North, Robert Schuller, Dave Thomas, and others. I told them if I did not have *our* funds released and in my account by Friday at 4:30 p.m., I would release the photographs to the global media with my story. Incredibly, after nearly a year, they decided to release the almost \$20,000 of ours they had been holding hostage. They actually wanted to know if they should overnight the check or do a wire transfer.

We were able to pay the back interest on our mortgages and stop the foreclosure. Not all that long ago, we had been out of debt completely with the exception of a first mortgage on our home. We then went bankrupt, lost our retirement account, sold our investment properties, destroyed our once-perfect credit, and had three mortgages — and the IRS had a lien on our home. All of this was a result of our Amway experience.

We had junk cars with high mileage on them. Despite this, we were beginning to feel more freedom than we ever had in “the group” as Emeralds. We went to the movies and did activities as a family. This felt rather awkward at first, but it was good to be together — even though there was a deep chasm between Patty and me. She had been “harmed” into silence. I tried to keep things at a fairly superficial level, but I was not emotionally stable either. My innermost being wanted to fix everything. We were free, but imprisoned at the same time. We did not know who we were or what to do with our lives. We had spent nine years sharing false hope with others and now we were unable to enjoy genuine hope in our own relationship.

A Rose by Any Other Name

Amway went on what seems to be a corporate mission focused on removing any hint of “Amway-ness” from its business or its distributors. The *Amagram*, a monthly magazine sent to Amway distributors, is now called *The Loop*. Amway distributors are now called IBOs (Independent Business Owners). What an incredible farce. I have perhaps a more accurate acronym for IBO. It’s... **I’m Bending Over**. The Amway Distributors Association is now the IBOA International. The Amway Mutual Fund became the Activa Mutual Fund. Dexter’s bi-monthly magazine is no longer called *Dreambuilders*; it is now *The Business Owner*. Amway now seems to have, once again, morphed into a new parent company named Alticor. It appears that Amway has been broken down into smaller companies called Access Business Group and Pyxis Innovations. Amway, Quixtar, Access Business Group, and Pyxis Innovations are now subsidiaries of Alticor. I believe that Amway ownership is expecting a huge class action suit or Federal interdiction against Amway and is skeletonizing its assets as an umbrella of protection. There has been a huge push for Quixtar and its new “IBOs.” The sad part of it is that many people, earnestly seeking opportunity, think they actually have all the rights of a business owner when they become a Quixtar IBO.

He’s Really a Good Guy ...

“The leadership in this organization from the Yager family on throughout are committed... doing everything that they can do to make sure you have every opportunity to succeed. An equal opportunity for everyone in this room regardless of what your background may be.”*

— Doug DeVos, Head of Amway North American Operations

It’s nice to have Doug DeVos tell the distributors about the quality of the leadership they’re under. Here’s how Dexter advises he will handle people who dare leave the group:

“We are right. We love you. You have the right to be stupid; it’s your life. I’ll hurt over you, cause I love you. But you are making a decision that will affect you and the future generations of your family. If you leave, you won’t be back. My door won’t be open. Probably your pride will keep you away, or they’ll have spent all your energy. You can’t

* *Amway Special Guests Speakers D. DeVos, B. Kerkstra* audiotape, GDL 96-21, Copyright InterNet Service Corporation

afford this decision, but if you do it, I love ya. But if you do it, you're no longer welcome here. I don't let the disloyal come here. If you are going to be a competitor, you have told me you are the materialistic one. I brought you into my family, and now you would like to come rape my family? I'm not going to let it happen. Remember, you are walking away from all your friends. If they've conned you that well, and I can't convince you otherwise, you won't ever have to say you're sorry, the world will know it. I'm not 'sorry' in the apology way; you leave, you're just sorry. I think you're more guy than that. I know you're more man than that. Don't prove me wrong."

"I'm not going to beat him up; *I'm going to tear his stupid heart out!!!* You are not going to destroy yourself. I don't let you commit suicide easy. But if you are going to be damned, it's your choice. I'll love you in your sickness. But when you walk out that door, it's over."

"Every now and then, I have to make a decision in this business, I have loved you, and I have loved you, and I have loved you when nobody else could love you. But, if you leave, I'll have more time for somebody else."

"It is amazing when I get people split from me, and they do this, and they do that. See, at one point let me tell ya, and I am telling this for your own worth, for your own knowledge, the Bible says Jesus came to separate the chaff from the wheat."²

He won't let you commit suicide easily and he'll "love you in your sickness." I cannot believe we sat through this moronic diatribe with hundreds of intelligent people. No wonder we were terrified to leave. Telling distributors who would leave that they will be damned, are "sorry," or will have their hearts torn out are tactics described by cult experts as phobia building techniques.

What does Amway think about one of their largest distributors, whose system of success has been blamed for bankruptcies, broken homes, foreclosures, and former distributors requiring cult de-programming? Are they horrified? Are they going to take immediate punitive action? Will they starve him and his family to bankruptcy and foreclosure? Not exactly. The July/August 2000 issue of Dexter's *Dreambuilder* magazine reported there was a great celebration to recognize Dexter and Birdie for their outstanding achievement in hitting a new level in the business. It stated:

"The public recognition by DeVos marked the end of a three month celebration that began January 25 when Chairman of the Board of Amway Corporation, Steve Van Andel, surprised Dexter and Birdie at their Florida home with a bonus check for \$2 million, the largest single bonus check in Company history."³

² Ibid.

³ *Dreambuilder*, July/August 2000 p. 6

Later in the celebration, Dick DeVos said, “You are a tremendous role model for Amway, and I am proud to call you my friend.”⁴ The next year, they gave Dexter and Birdie a \$2.5 million check for their “achievements.”

Deciding to make these discoveries public has been a very difficult journey, one for which I have already paid a high price. I could not find a single person who told me to do the right thing. Out of love, most all wanted me to walk away and take the money — but I was tormented by all those still ensnared and the thousands of people yet to come. A recent report estimated between “from 30,000 to 40,000 new IBOs sign up every month to build a business powered by Quixtar.”⁵ Is Quixtar much different than Amway or just a new, slicker wolf in sheep’s clothing? If you take a pig with festering sores, dripping in sewage, and put it in a prom dress, call it Sue, and give it a laptop, has it really changed in essence?

My crossroad decision to expose Amway came when I was traveling with a very well-known pastor on business. I explained my plight to him and waited for his advice. I got one more “walk away” response — again, out of love and concern for my family and me. I had hoped for an affirmation. I had, perhaps, the first clear thought in almost a year. I said, “All right, I’ll walk away. Now, tell me how, tomorrow, I can teach my children to do the right thing in every situation and trust God when the road looks too rough. How do I look my wife in the eyes and tell her I love her when I am no longer a man?” The answer was within me all along. I was not afraid to die, but I was **terrified of living as a coward**.

The fact that hundreds of thousands are being systematically recruited and seduced gives me nightmares constantly. It is like a cancer eating at me. The Federal Trade Commission, the Pennsylvania Attorney General’s Office, and the FBI do not even seem to be patronizing me. They are ignoring me. I do not think they are doing anything, but do not know for certain. The Attorney General’s Office, which has a big anti-fraud push on right now, will not touch it because the FBI is involved. This seems like a “Catch 22.” I have a death threat and volumes of documentation of global fraud and no one seems to want to do anything about it. The rage within me grows and pushes me further.

How long will it go on?

⁴ *Dreambuilder*, July/August 2000 p. 7

⁵ *Success Magazine*, September 2000 p. 80, Debbie Selinsky

Club Fed

*“Accountability is always about assuming responsibility, not deferring it. Unfortunately, we live in a time when our national leaders seldom admit sin — even when caught red-handed — and when people at every level of public life avoid accountability. Rather than ‘fess up,’ we cover up. Instead of telling the whole truth, we engage in ‘spin control,’ a euphemism for putting a bad situation in good light.”**

— Rich DeVos

This felt like a calling I *had* to complete, but it was also a curse. Calling or curse, I was driven to try to stop the harm that was being done. It seemed impossible. The adversaries were so large, powerful, wealthy, and well connected. We were completely broke. We had no social or political influence. We were mentally and psychologically drained. We did not even know *who we were*. Our personalities had been lost in the cult.

This was the hardest struggle of our lives. We were out of the Amway motivational cult, but, in many ways, were still prisoners. When we went shopping for non-Amway products, I still felt a mixture of euphoric freedom and guilt. We were fearful a distributor might see us with a cart full of “negative products” (products not from Amway). It was not rational, but these thoughts and emotions had been hard-wired into us after thousands of hours of tape and seminar indoctrination. We were trying to find our place in our relationship and in our new lives.

Our children were having the hardest time in their young lives changing to a public school where they knew no one. They, too, were very much strangers in a world they had been taught to fear. Undoing the programming will take time for all of us. Adam, Rachel, and Hannah all had wonderful public school teachers, and an incredible guidance counselor, Jennifer Drury, helped our entire family make this difficult transition. She had such a peaceful, calming, sincere way about her. Maybe that’s it. She was sincere. There is something wonderful about how genuine she was. These are the things we began to cherish.

I called all over the country to find a firm that would take our case to file a lawsuit against our upline, Rich DeVos, and Amway for the hell their business had made of our lives. I was turned down again and again and again. No one wanted to represent a destitute client against a towering multi-billion-dollar giant. If I had a \$10,000 retainer and could pay \$100-\$300 an hour, most could put aside their objections and take our case. But we had no money. I was just trying to keep up with my now-enormous mortgage and

* DeVos, Rich, *Hope From My Heart*, Thomas Nelson publishers, Copyright 2000, p. 70

IRS payments. Despite the documentation I possessed and my background as a Federal Auditor, I learned that no money means no legal representation. Justice does appear to have a price tag. Amway could drag a case out until anyone determined to fight them would have well over \$100,000 in legal bills. Gerry Hayden warned me he had far more than that into his case before it settled. This entire scheme was extremely well done, when you think it through. People were bled to financial ruin and then cast off like rubbish, in no position to file a case against the wealthy people who plundered them. No wonder the abuses had gone on for so long.

The reality of the situation was that we had no way to be compensated for what happened to us. In light of this, I gave up on the thought and contacted current litigants against Amway and their attorneys to provide testimony and documentation. If I was unable to help *us*, at least I could, perhaps, help others.

Through the Internet underground, I learned an attorney named James Meade was representing Sidney Schwartz pro bono, as Amway had sucked Sidney into the legal process. It seemed obvious to me they just wanted to crank up his legal bills until he had no more money and then close his web site, *Amway: The Untold Story*. After he could no longer afford legal counsel, he had to shut his site down. He had also been named in a suit involving Proctor and Gamble. During our Amway indoctrination period, Zack and others had told us that the CEO of Proctor and Gamble was a Satanist and had admitted it on national television. This made distributors even more loyal to their “own” Amway brand of soaps and cleaners. This current lawsuit involving Proctor and Gamble concerned the dissemination of this rumor by high-level Amway distributors.

I contacted James (J.B.) Meade in his Tacoma, Washington, office and found him to be a very friendly man. I told him my story and that I had a huge cache of documentation he would find useful in Sidney’s case. After asking what I had, he decided to fly out to Pennsylvania to look at it. It took about a week before he made the trip. I greeted him at the door and he met Patty briefly. By this time, she had no interest in anything that had to do with Amway, so J.B. and I met for hours in my small home office. We talked at great length — again, it was reassuring just to talk to someone who understood the whole situation. Over that day and the next, he collected a large amount of documentation from me and allowed me to rant and rave as I related my experience to him. It was cathartic to have someone to talk to.

I was shocked when, at the end of one of our meetings, J.B. told me he might be able to take my case on a contingency basis. This was the first glimmer of hope we’d had in quite a while. I was absolutely elated when he called back in a few weeks and announced that he had the green light from his firm to take our case. It was nothing short of a miracle in the David and Goliath battle our lives had become.

About this time, I was contacted by a man named David Brear in France. He sent me a manuscript for a book he was writing titled *Amway: The American Dream Made Nightmare*. It systematically chronicled identical fraud, theft by deception, and cultism throughout Amway’s European motivational organizations. Zack had advised us he had over 40,000 distributors in the UK alone, so this news did not surprise me. I found David adamant in his will to make this public, and we began to encourage each other in sporadic communications. He became a treasured resource for me, calling with uncanny timing, right when I would feel as though I could bear no more.

I was having a hard time holding it together at times, as was Patty. It had been close to two years since we left the group and been “excommunicated.” We would see people from The Business who had been like family members to us for years, and they would walk away to avoid us. This made us feel like lepers or social outcasts. At times, the isolation would take its toll. We were still unable to open up emotionally and develop new friendships. Patty and I did not talk about how to overcome this, but we found a therapeutic satisfaction from throwing ourselves into our kids’ lives. We worked hard to develop a shield of normalcy around them despite what was happening to us. We focused on helping them develop friends and become active in sports. Starting with Adam, they all became active in soccer. Over a period of several seasons, they each became very good at the sport. It began to build their self-esteem and opened them up to new friendships. We, too, began to meet nice adult couples: the other soccer parents. The relationships were superficial at first, but, hey! — it was a start. Virtually no one from this group had known us, as we had existed in our community in near isolation for almost ten years. People asked if we had just moved into the area! I began to coach some of the kids’ soccer teams and really took great joy in working with and encouraging the children.

My life seemed at times to be normal, but then often eroded into a ballet of the bizarre. I had a regular job and family and was a soccer coach. That was all fairly normal. On the other hand, I was working with a few trusted people across the country and in Europe to develop more documentation to stop a global fraud. We used fully encrypted, web-based e-mails and aliases, since we discovered that Amway was getting personal computer hard-drive data by subpoena. They could then use information obtained from that computer to go after others who had “fallen from grace.” We were a powerful force in that we held each other together when the pressure became too great. For a five-month period, I had been in such a dark depression I couldn’t even communicate. As I emerged from that darkness, I found myself being accepted back immediately by this supportive group. We agreed to tell each other when we were failing from the enormous pressures. We offered free counseling to singles and couples who were emerging from Amway cult group(s). It helped *us* to help *them* get back on their feet.

Over the next several months, more distributors began dropping out and calling me, half terrified to even talk because they knew it violated the “rules” of the secretive Amway world. Some alerted us to the existence of many more rumors that were being used to discredit me. One of the reasons that I had no money as an Emerald, distributors had been informed, was that I had lost millions gambling on the Internet. This was, of course, in addition to being a cocaine addict and an alcoholic. Some were told that Patty and I were each having an affair and we were getting divorced. This helps to explain why most of the people who dropped out were fearful. They were partially fearful of us and what would be said about them. People must have their character destroyed upon exiting a cult group as, internally, there is no **legitimate** reason to leave. They also came out at varying levels of understanding of what had happened to them. Because I was expecting Amway or Zack to send a “mole” to me feigning a need for help, I devised a series of questions which I fired off at anyone who tried to contact me. If they were still in the organization, they would have almost no knowledge of the fraud, the lawsuits, and other events. I quizzed each one thoroughly until it was clear they legitimately were “out.”

One such contact was a couple who were Directs in Zack's organization. They had researched the lawsuits posted on the Internet and were enraged after learning what had happened to them. Another was a young couple from New York who worked with Zack directly. Zack had gotten a little over \$30,000 in book, tape, and seminar money from them. Yet another was a relatively high-level distributor who agreed to act as a mole in order to provide me with a constant stream of current information on Zack's business and recruitment activities. These contacts proved to be invaluable, as they in turn obtained information from others they knew. Their partnership enabled me to cull larger amounts of information without the direct risk of exposure. I continued to fax this updated information to the FBI and to meet with Special Agent Lou Glodek in person.

As people dropped out, I asked them to write testimonials regarding their recruitment and subsequent losses. Some included their tax returns for documentation. It destroyed me to read their letters. They were my friends. It was heart wrenching to read about the magnitude of the devastation in only a dozen or so families in the first set of testimonials. There were literally hundreds of thousands of dollars in losses, an IRS audit with a \$5,000 penalty (after years of Amway business losses), and one family who had lost their home. We had brought in *thousands* of good people. Do the math. This human toll was enormous.

Perhaps now you understand why I could not walk away. This has been a journey to hell itself. I am neither a hero nor a martyr. I wish I had not been the one called to do this, but I was. I could not turn my back on the people I loved as family, even those who have been induced to despise me.

The momentum increased as J.B., our attorney, filed a lawsuit on our behalf against members of our upline, Zack and Molly, Amway, and Rich DeVos. They, of course, immediately attempted to push it into arbitration with the arbitration document we had been forced to sign years earlier — at the peril of losing our business and sole source of income. Arbitration would have been good for them because they could have simply written us a check, silenced us, and kept on doing what they were doing. We would have been barred from making the public aware of the scheme.

I mentioned to J.B. that I had heard Amway was filing harassment suits against attorneys and law firms who dared represent clients against them. This would most likely put enough fear into a small firm to never take another anti-Amway client. What firm could prevail in a legal and financial battle with a multi-billion-dollar giant? He then told me that Amway *was* suing him. J.B., his wife, and his firm were all named as defendants in a trumped-up suit that looks like nothing but an abuse of the legal process. He had taken quite a few clients and had represented them in court cases against Amway and its motivational organizations. How many victims would this beast claim?

Soon, a police car pulled up to our home and a sheriff gave Patty and me notice that we were subpoenaed in the case by the Amway's dreaded legal counsel, Norbert Kugele. He was the one who filed legal motions that had caused web site hosts Sidney Schwartz, Ruth Carter, Ashley Wilkes, and others to run up combined legal expenses of tens of thousands of dollars. If this continued, I knew it would soon be difficult for victims to even obtain a firm willing to represent them. We showed up at the deposition with our attorney's attorney and submitted to a video-taped deposition. Norbert was not a monster in appearance and was actually soft spoken in manner. I still despised him for what he was part of.

The questioning centered on whether J.B. had used confidential information from a prior case to induce us to use him to file a lawsuit against Amway. This was preposterous, as *I* was the one who *tracked him down* to give him information to help defend Sidney Schwartz. I used this opportunity to personally advise Norbert of the near two-decade long fraud, illegalities, and systematic distributor abuses perpetrated by the now collaborative efforts of Amway, Dexter Yager, Zack Walters, and members of the DeVos family. Once again, Amway's own legal counsel was directly advised of these wrong-doings. I believed Norbert's firm may actually have been in jeopardy of facing legal action by the Michigan bar, in that their actions make it seem they are almost complicit in actively perpetuating a criminal activity. Every client deserved fair legal representation. However, taking legal actions that silence and financially punish those who speak out against the fraud prolonged its existence.

We, too, felt the full brunt of Amway's legal muscle early into the process of our case. We went to the first deposition and were greeted by an intimidating wall of "suits." Attorneys had been brought in from Michigan, two cities in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Washington, DC. It was just Patty and me and J.B. opposing a solid wall of defendants and their extensive legal team(s). J.B. performed incredibly under this pressure.

The next night, I was in his hotel room going over tapes and other documentation when Patty called terror-stricken. Our 12-year-old son, Adam, had answered the phone and heard a man ranting on and on about killing people. Wide eyed, he just handed the telephone to Patty, who listened to the same insane tirade about "killing people" and "solving things himself and it not going to court." They did not recognize the voice. I called 911 and drove frantically to the house, a loaded gun in my lap. My heart was racing as fast as my car, as I thought about McKay Everett, the distributor's boy who was murdered in Texas. Thankfully, all was well when I got to our home. But, our entire experience had shown these people clearly had no limits. Even the Mafia has limits. They have a code of honor. These people have none. The state police responded, took a report, and were very helpful. I would be in ongoing contact with them.

I called the FBI from work and left a message for Lou the next morning. He returned the call at my office at work and I relayed the details of the incident to him. He agreed to look into it, but didn't seem overly concerned. I had already been told directly which gun would be used to kill me. With my wife and son now threatened — and even though I had provided documentation of massive, systematic, global fraud — it still sounded as if nothing was going to happen. That did it! I completely snapped and started shouting at him. I wanted to know how many dead people the FBI needed in order for them to do something. I was in my office in a little cubicle screaming. People were standing up and looking at me. He started shouting back. This scream fest continued for a minute or two and then simmered down. He wasn't apathetic; he had been up all night working, was exhausted, and had a huge caseload. We both apologized, and he came to our home later that day to meet with us again. I continued to meet him at home, in a parking lot, and at a restaurant to provide him with more and more documentation as I obtained it from various sources. Eventually, Lou seemed like a friend, and I came to trust him completely.

Yet more distributors dropped out and brought me volumes of documentation. There were several new tapes by the Diamond who threatened to kill me with a MAC 10. The contents of one tape, produced by I.C.C.A. and copyrighted by Internet Services

Corporation, revealed how far these people were willing to go. The Amway Diamond on the tape was discussing loyalty before a large audience and described in detail how he told a guy backstage he would “take him out” if he was ever disrespectful of Zack. He relayed the whole conversation and was *bragging* about the time he threatened to kill me! He said he was not afraid of going to prison. His wife spoke, remarking that she would never leave him, because he told her he would shoot her through the back if she did. He also bragged about carrying a gun with a 15-round clip. I am dumbfounded they would make these statements from stage. It is even worse that huge volumes of copies of this were made and sold as a teaching tool! Zack distributed these tapes to his organization. To defy him meant death. All of these tapes were immediately provided to the FBI.

Most of the people who dropped out wanted to talk once and then vanished to forever forget what had happened. At first I was enraged at those who were unwilling to stand and fight. Patty helped me to understand we all had to recover in different ways and at different rates, and I came to respect the road they had to travel. When I was honest with myself, many times I wished I could join them. All seemed terrified at the possibility of retribution. A few were fearful, yet strong enough to stay and help.

This well-networked group of former distributors brought about a pivotal turning point in this *thing* our lives had become. They assisted me in locating and contacting Sally Porter*, Zack’s niece. Not only was she his niece, she worked in his warehouse for years and was an Amway distributor personally sponsored by Zack. She was eager to talk and informed me that her “Uncle Zack” had completely destroyed her life. This was becoming a familiar-sounding story. She and her husband had moved here to work for Zack. They worked as domestic help around his mansion, on his properties, and, most importantly, in his warehouse. She described the secret, off-limits tape room where she and other employees made tens of thousands of tapes. I had heard rumors of this, but she was the first to verify it. We had been told all the tapes came from Dexter. Despite his ceaseless talks on loyalty, Zack was making his own tapes and screwing Dexter out of the profits.

Sally related that Zack had told offensive racial jokes in front of her children. She also informed me that no black employees would be hired to work at the warehouse. As a family member, employee, and distributor, she had been privy to more truthful information than anyone. Sally remarked on an ongoing situation where Zack would give Molly’s mother a \$5,000 or more Christmas gift and then a 1099 form. If this was true, he was writing his elderly mother-in-law off as a business expense! I was sickened by these revelations. This was the man I had taught my children to honor and respect! She made me aware of other situations involving Zack that I will not even commit to print. Nothing shocked me at this point. I was numb.

Sally remarked that, on multiple occasions, Zack had her use one of Dexter’s copyrighted tapes as a master and would have her run off high volumes of copies to market to the group at retail. This way, he could make a tape of Dexter for twenty or thirty cents instead of paying Dexter for it. These would then be retailed to thousands weekly at \$6.00 each. She described Zack as charming at first, but then demeaning and abusive after she had given him years of service. She provided some critical information, in that she and her husband would pack up a truck full of tapes, books, and videos, and they would stock and man the tool tables at large seminars. There, she related, they would

* Not her real name

sell as much as \$10,000 a day in cash sales. A three-day weekend seminar could bring in as much as \$30,000 in cash sales. Even though thousands of people had paid as much as \$400 a couple for a weekend seminar, the convention hall would be emptied on Sunday, and each had to pay \$10 to get back in for the Sunday “leadership” session. On a group of 2,000, you were now looking at an additional \$20,000 in cash, in addition to the normal walk-in door sales. Kerry usually ran these sales and spirited that cash away to the secret counting room. With door and tool table sales, Zack may have left these seminars with well over \$50,000 in *cash* for a **single weekend**. Do you wonder what happened to all that cash? After much digging, that question was also answered.

Zack would be doing a training session on building our Amway business and pull out anywhere from \$10,000-\$25,000 in cash as a visual example that the Amway business worked. *Now* I knew where it came from — and it was not Amway. This explained the “flash cash” he waved at us as young Amway distributors. But, where did the cash go? With Sally’s help, I was able to track down Zack’s former bookkeeper, Laura Dean^{*}, in a mid-western state. She was very nervous at first and obviously fearful of Zack. I had known her, but only by her first name, as we were to have almost no contact with Zack’s staff. She was frightened of Zack and his business operations, and had left his employment with some of his 1995 financial statements to use as an insurance policy of sorts, as she was not comfortable with the business operation.

During our conversations, Laura would go from helpful to angry to fearful. Both she and her husband were kind and wanted to help, but were afraid of having Zack drawn back into their lives. At first, Laura agreed to send me copies of the financial statements, but then decided not to as she was fearful Zack could take legal action against her for taking them. I hated to do it, but our law firm subpoenaed the documents in order to keep them from being destroyed. Laura spoke with J.B. and agreed to fly to his office in Tacoma to give a deposition of what she knew of Zack’s operations. I had no idea we would ever get this much information, but Zack seems not to have made a lot of friends along the way.

One of the most shocking revelations she made to me was that she took care of all his business accounts and personal checkbook. During her six years there, she confirmed she did not deposit any cash into the business or personal accounts. This was startling, considering what Sally had shared about as much as \$50,000 cash coming in over a single weekend. Over two decades, Zack may have spirited off millions in cash sales. Laura affirmed that, when the entire distributor organization was forced to book rooms through Walters International, Zack was making \$10-\$15 profit per room. He had a tough refund policy and rarely would return seminar money for any reason. She relayed the story of one woman who had paid almost \$400 for a weekend seminar, but could not attend when her father was tragically burned to death in a house fire. She commented that Zack would not authorize a refund, as the “food and room” was already paid for. This was despite the fact we always had walk-ins who could have filled the spot on site.

Convention Concepts Unlimited^{**} was a company run by Ben Novack out of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He handled the booking and hotel arrangements for many of the Amway Diamonds’ major seminars. He has likely handled tens of millions of dollars of the Diamonds’ seminar money. Laura advised that, after once such event, Ben owed Zack

^{*} Not her real name

^{**} See www.conventionconcepts.com

nearly \$30,000. Laura described the instance in which she was instructed to call Ben and have him send half in cash and half in a check. She never saw the \$15,000 cash to deposit. The documents she turned over were terribly incriminating. In spite of both Zack and Molly's public profession of decades of *success in Amway*, their financials from 1995 show that an estimated 94% of their nearly \$3,000,000 *reported* net income came **not** from Amway, but from their secret motivation business. In fact, if he did not have his tools business and you applied his business expenses against his Amway income alone, his Amway business would have shown a six-figure net loss. Despite the verbal floggings I took from him about being a real man and making my business profitable, I, as a destitute Emerald, was making **more** net income from Amway than he was! If we removed Zack's tool income, a 16-year-old flipping burgers at McDonald's made more net income than this mega-successful Amway Double Diamond. How pathetic!

This information only fueled the fire to get to the bottom of all the money laundering. After this discovery, I was then able to track down William Pearson*, Zack's former personal limousine driver who had moved to Alabama. William was extremely friendly and not fearful of Zack at all. He seemed eager to assist in any way he could. Guess what? He, too, had been screwed by Zack and acknowledged he had left being owed a large amount of back pay. What a shock. I already knew the seminar cash was secretly counted in a room, supervised by Kerry, and then placed in suitcases or briefcases and transported to Zack's limousine, Mercedes, or Coach. William verified that it was stashed in briefcases and said he watched Zack load them into the safe off his garage or the one in Molly's office in their home.

But where did all the money go? I was at Zack's mansion on one occasion when the doorbell rang. He motioned for me to get it. I went to the front of the home and greeted the FedEx deliveryman. I signed for the package and brought it to Zack. He was not happy that I had signed for it without his consent. He looked at it for a minute and then opened it, deciding to share its contents to motivate us. It was a shipment of gold bullion coins that were non-traceable and as good as cash in any country in the world. When I remembered this incident, I discussed this with several trusted people in the underground network. Sally told me that her father was at Zack's mansion one day when he produced a large envelope from the safe off the garage and proceeded to dump diamonds all over a table. According to Sally, Zack bragged, "This is how I hide my money." Again, money was converted to a non-traceable equivalent, good in any country in the world. It looked like my former hero may be guilty of fraud, tax evasion, and possibly money laundering.

I provided all of this information to the FBI as soon as I obtained it and this information may have been what ultimately tipped the scales. Lou was tight-lipped and could tell me nothing about the FBI investigation except that there was one underway and I was listed as a cooperative witness. We were talking one day and he said the words I thought I might never hear. He asked, "So how soon do you want to testify before a Grand Jury?"

"Tomorrow!" was my immediate reply. I felt certain the whole house of cards would come crashing down even if only Zack was indicted and convicted by a jury. This very well may have been the beginning of the end.

* Not his real name

My work could soon be over and I could have a life again. I was fearfully elated, if that makes sense. The end was in sight; yet the danger level just increased with me being the key witness for the Grand Jury. This book had been provided to both the FBI and the U.S. Assistant Attorney to be used as the backbone of their case. There was a small but very real chance I would be killed for this prior to publication. In that event, I made arrangements for its immediate electronic global distribution. My death would not have been in vain. I was but one person; yet, I was the spokesperson for millions who have been silenced. I had not chosen this role; yet, it was mine. If I were murdered, the voice would simply scream louder. This genie will *never* be shoved back into the bottle!

Further investigative efforts revealed a political action committee (PAC) which had raised hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to give to Republican candidates. It was called Restoring The American Dream. Dick DeVos was the Chairman, according to stationery sent to the Federal Election Commission dated May 21, 2001. It was funded, in part, by a large number of \$5,000 donations from Zack, Dexter, Birdie, the Yager children (Doyle, Holly, Jeff, Lorryn, Rhonda, and Steven), Bill and Peggy Britt, and many other Amway Diamonds and DeVos family members. The funds were distributed to conservatives with John Ashcroft (R-MO) landing a whopping \$10,000 donation in the 1999-2000 cycle. Perhaps the PAC considers this insurance against regulatory action.

Do I believe past-President George Bush, Billy Zeoli, Senator Rick Santorum, Shad Helmstetter, John Ashcroft, and others referenced in this book are “in on it” and corrupt? No, I believe many good people have had their credibility used to promote something that has none. Their reaction to these revelations will reveal their true character. When President-elect George Bush was running for President, his opponents said he was a candidate of the rich elite, not of the people. I did not believe this, but the proof will be in his reaction to these revelations. Will he look out for the many honest, hardworking people who put him in office? Although he and Attorney General John Ashcroft received campaign contributions from Amway-related people or entities, I believed they would do the right thing. This certainly may be a defining moment of this presidency. It is time to clean house. I would certainly be glad to meet with them if it will help end this.

Is there punishment for white collar, systematic fraud in America? There was a case of this recently. William McCorkle and his wife, Chantal, had run a very successful infomercial since 1992 on real estate investing. They shot film clips in front of a luxury home, on a yacht, with a Lamborghini Diablo, and on a private jet. This gave the illusion they had created tremendous wealth at a young age by investing in real estate. The problem is that they made very little at all in real estate. What they did was sell an estimated \$72 million¹ in video tapes, audio tapes, and seminars. Is this sounding familiar? (\$72 million is a lot, but it is child’s play compared to the billions Amway has reaped in collaboration with its kingpin distributors.) Apparently, the initial seminar courses were just a “come on” to buy more and more books, tapes, and videos in McCorkle’s **system of success**, until many had nothing left. For all their crimes, William and Chantal were sentenced to a harsh 24 years in prison with no possibility for parole, due to stiff Federal guidelines. The global fraud revealed in this book is nearly identical in nature to that committed by the McCorkles. The only difference seems to be that the

¹ Seattle Times, Tuesday, January 26, 1999

McCorkles have been *stopped* from plundering the public and have had to face justice. Perhaps they should have spent more time with religious and political leaders.

What is the truth here? I do not expect you to robotically accept everything that you have read. I challenge you to accept none of it on face value. *Think for yourself!* Draw your own conclusions. Go to www.Amway.com and see what they have to offer. Go to an e-commerce recruitment meeting for Quixtar. Talk to distributors. Ask to see their last three years' tax returns. A good accountant would insist that you check the financial history of any business before making a lifetime investment of your time and money. Don't accept any lame excuses such as, "Well, you can make more than me, so I won't show you." Demand to see the real tax returns and figures or walk away. Amway and Quixtar would both most likely close their doors if they were ever forced to publish the true net income of their distributors.

Knowing all that I have revealed to you in these pages, I still am an unlikely whistle-blower. I am non-confrontational in nature. Perhaps I have taken this punishing course of action because I still embrace the qualities this business claimed it stood for: character, integrity, free enterprise, and success through servanthood to others. I brought many people I loved, including my own father, into this business predicated upon those qualities. Unfortunately, it appears the Amway business has long since been devoid of any of these characteristics. In my opinion, many of the people involved with the Amway, Quixtar, and their related motivational organizations are some of the most dishonest, wholly corrupt, morally bankrupt people I have ever been associated with. It seems clear that Amway and Quixtar are knowingly the gatekeepers for highly destructive cult groups. They are, collaboratively with their Kingpin distributors, Merchants of Deception.

Not long ago, rescuers were searching the smoldering carnage left in the wake of the World Trade Center and Pentagon terrorist attacks. This violent terrorist group attempted to destroy our hope and our freedoms. America will respond and hunt down those responsible and will make every effort to protect us from these foreign evil-doers. However, most great civilizations have fallen from within. Families who lost loved ones, and those being laid off in varying sectors of our economy, now, have a very real economic need. They are prime targets for repulsively twisted, flag-waving, "God loving" motivational organizations with a wonderful, new "opportunity to share." Will our government allow these poor people to once again be victimized?

There is now another scourge sweeping our nation. It is domestic, financial terrorism. In a single moment, we are seeing entire lifetimes of savings wiped out by corrupt corporate thieves. Some have amassed billions through fraud. As each company like Enron, Worldcom, Adelphia Cable, and Global Crossing falls, so does the livelihood and savings of thousands. Something far more sinister is occurring in light of this. Faith in our stocks and the free-market capitalist system that built this country is eroding. Will this administration continue to "look the other way" since the Republicans have been the largest political benefactors of the Amway and Quixtar motivational fraud? The FBI and the prosecutor's office have had the information contained in this book for three years as of this writing. Pennsylvania Attorney General Mike Fisher's staff has refused to take any action on this fraud despite formal complaints I have made along with the documentation provided in this book. Mike Fisher is now running for governor. Perhaps his donation record is loaded with Amway Kingpin funds as was Senator Rick Santorum's. Perhaps a

running platform for re-election should be “Donations accepted — hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil.”

The individuals and entities involved are far from nameless or faceless. We know who they are and what they do. Through the Amway and Quixtar motivational organizations, will we knowingly allow fraud and cultism to be an ongoing American export to the very countries that look to us for hope?

They stand metaphorically before you now. Some of the Diamonds are crowded onto a walled playground. They have a bag of candy in one hand and a Bible and an American flag in the other. Their pants and skirts are down around their ankles. They are panting and drooling in anticipation. The school bell rings and those responsible come in from Amway/Quixtar to pull the heavy gates open and kindly greet the children as they come running and laughing into the playground. Their warm smiles vanish as the steel doors slam shut and the frenzied, terror-filled screaming begins. The local politicians close their windows to drown out the annoying sound of their constituents screaming for help. When the children have been abused to the point they are completely silent, the gatekeepers swing the gates open. They walk happily to the shower rooms with the Diamonds to change out of their blood-spattered clothing. From the playground, they can be heard humming “God Bless America.” Soon they emerge in tuxedos and gowns and disappear into their waiting limousines for the \$10,000-a-plate fund-raisers with local political and religious leaders. Alone, the children crawl quietly away. The final chapter of this story has yet to be written. The playground is open and the silent children can only hope for help.

When the playground is closed, I will find peace.

Epilogue

Free speech is anything but free. Two lawsuits were filed against me and subsequently settled. The resulting legal fees are in excess of \$45,000. If you found this book and my efforts have helped you, please make a donation to my legal defense fund. You can donate to the non profit group Pyramid Scheme Alert at:

<http://pyramidschemealert.org/PSAMain/donate/LegalDefensedonate.html>

I will never handle these funds and they are paid directly to my attorney.

Since launching the Merchants of Deception web site, I have been contacted by thousands of victims from 24 nations. Some lost a few thousand dollars while others lost tens of thousands over many years. Some went bankrupt and others lost their homes. Some allege it cost them their marriage. I have received four reports of distributor suicides to date, two in the U.S. and two in Australia. Who is truly responsible? How long will this go on until someone of character and courage takes the helm at Amway or Quixtar? If you have not yet sent me YOUR story, please do so at enschei@yahoo.com . Please include the amount (approximate) of your losses and the state or country you reside in. This is very important and it will be added to the database of thousands of other victims who have already responded. **You** can make a significant difference.

There are many significant updates on the global deception located at www.merchantsofdeception.com/news.html .

These include the following:

- ∞ **Tools Business banned in the UK** and Amway sponsoring shut down for 120 days – **Amway may be closed** in this country due to legal action taken by the DTI. *Merchants of Deception* is utilized as a resource in this case.
- ∞ **Amway Offices raided in India** and it is reported that Amway is “accused of running a national scam with its money circulation schemes”. *Merchants of Deception* utilized as a resource in this case.

- ∞ **Dateline NBC** – Undercover investigation launched with *Merchants of Deception*. I appeared on this show which documented in real time the very deceptions exposed in this book. View the show now online.
- ∞ **Connecticut Better Business Bureau** reviewing Quixtar's business practices.
- ∞ **Pastor allegedly bankrupted** in the business
- ∞ **Quixtar attempts to force me into (gagged) arbitration** and loses.
- ∞ **Quixtar files Federal Lawsuit against me** and creates tens of thousands in legal expenses
- ∞ **Class Action Lawsuit Filed against Quixtar**
- ∞ **IBO's claims losses** of tens of thousands of dollars from around the world.

We all have our obstacles and our personal Goliaths. It is in battling the giants and in the storms that we most often discover the most important truths of our lives. May this book be an encouragement to you. Face the giant. Have faith. Persist. Love will again prove to be stronger than hate, and faith stronger than deceit.

May God bless you and yours and may today be the start of a fresh new life.

Eric Scheibeler

Evil Triumphs When Good People Do Nothing

It appears that the deceptions and abuses outlined in this book have perpetuated for decades, at least in part, because distributors have been well indoctrinated to believe *they* were the problem when they lost their money. We can no longer be silent victims if the abusive practices are to be stopped. If you have been deceived, I am asking you to take a simple action. I am not asking you to put your life on the line, but to simply detail your story, the representations that were made to you, and the financial and other losses you may have incurred. It would be a good starting point to send them to your local consumer protection division of your state's Attorney General's office.

For any formal investigation that arises, I will, at my own expense, provide the authorities with a CD of literally thousands of IBO victim testimonials, detailed Amway/Quixtar documentation that will support your consumer complaint and a geographically localized list of victim witness contacts. I will also put them in contact with those leading other investigations to coordinate their efforts.

Please let me know if you file a complaint at enschei@yahoo.com and have those in charge contact me.

Some distributors have felt it helped their healing to write of their experiences and learn of others who went through the same challenges. You may or may not have been involved in one of the motivational groups. Coming out of one can be a lonely, terrifying experience. The distributors who continue to drop out and contact me are all at varying levels of psychological and emotional distress. The one common denominator they all seem to have is a deep pain and hurt for being “flushed” or banished. Like Patty and me, their closest friends began to treat them like lepers almost the day they stopped buying tape-of-the-week and going to seminars. This hurts when it comes from people you love, who have professed their love for you for years. Writing about our experience and reading the stories of others has helped many of us. Just a paragraph or a page or two would be a wonderful contribution on your part. If for no other reason, I would be thankful to hear from you if this book has helped you.

Please send your personal story by e-mail to:
enschei@yahoo.com Thanks so much for taking the time.

For security purposes, no e-mails with attachments will be opened. You can sign up for free updates on the fraud by downloading the free copy of this book at www.merchantsofdeception.com Current updates are available at www.merchantsofdeception.com/news.html