

Analyzing the Written Interview

NOTE:
DO NOT READ THIS UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE
WRITTEN INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT.

Now it's time to come back to your written interview. Most people who engage in individual assessment as a vocation (such as career counselors) begin data collection with a long interview of the person to be assessed. In one way or another they say "Tell me about yourself," and then they shut up and take notes, usually intervening only when the interviewee stops talking. Usually this open-ended background interview turns out to be the most important source of information for the assessment.

We began the self-assessment process with a written version of such a background interview. The written interview exercise is very similar to a good introductory counseling interview. And like such an interview, it will be our most important data source.

The Interview Output

To use the responses to the written interview for assessment purposes, we need first to consider what types of information those responses provide. But stop and think for a moment; the most obvious answer is not correct.

If a person claims to have been born March 26, 1948, and to have one sister, it is probably reasonable to assume that these assertions are true. That

is, they are probably verifiable "facts." But if you examine a typical written interview, you will find that only a small percentage of its content represents clear-cut "facts" about the person's background. More important, if you examine the interviews of three or four people, you will find considerable variety in the types of "facts" presented. Unlike a more directive interview, in which a person is asked a series of very specific "fact-eliciting" questions, this type of interview allows the interviewee great latitude in deciding what to talk about—which is, of course, the whole idea.

In talking about one's background, any person, given the time, could quite literally write at least one book. (Some autobiographies stretch across three or four volumes.) But because of the context in which the written interview is conducted, one gets instead the equivalent of one or two chapters. And the task of selecting what goes into those chapters is left to the interviewee.

Of course, people being interviewed do not sit down and visualize their history and then develop conscious criteria for editing. They just talk or, in the case of our written equivalent, write. The result, however, is hardly a random selection. Two written interviews produced by the same person a month apart will look remarkably similar (and quite different from most other people's written interviews).

This type of data-generating instrument assumes that, given considerable latitude in responding to questions, a person must consciously or unconsciously choose what and how to answer, and that those choices tell us something important about that

individual. What is said, what is not said, how it is said, the order in which it is said—all is potentially useful information about the individual.

Potentially is the key, for some of these data may say more about the manner and the context in which they were generated than they do about the person. Be sure to keep in mind the caveats outlined in Chapter 2 regarding contextual influence (see page 8).

Interpreting the Output

To make sense of this “potentially useful information,” to decide what, if anything, the data tell us about the more central aspects of the interviewee, let us return to a more careful consideration of the technique we often use to “interpret” information in our everyday lives: drawing inferences based on patterns we see in the data.

Drawing inferences is something literally everyone engages in almost constantly. We see or hear something, compare, often unconsciously, that perception with our assumptions about the nature of the world and of society, and then draw a conclusion that is to us “logical” or appropriate or consistent with that comparison. This mental process has been recognized for thousands of years. Epictetus, the Greek Stoic philosopher, noted that “Men are not disturbed by things, but by the views which they take of them.” In other words, two people may observe the same event and draw entirely different conclusions. This is because of the differences in their assumptions about the way the world operates. Thus, the conclusions people draw reveal something about their assumptions. If we focus on those assumptions, we can learn more clearly what they are and, if they seem unrealistic, perhaps modify them. In self-assessment, this introspective process of examining our own assumptions will help us to draw conclusions or inferences that are more “logical” to others as well as to ourselves.

Consider an example or two. When Mr. Jones arrives at his new boss’s home (which he has never seen before) for dinner, he notices that it has a circular driveway, a six-car garage, tennis courts, and a stable. He preconsciously makes a number of assumptions (about the cost of such a home and its upkeep, his boss’s salary, his boss’s previous work history, and so on) and quickly concludes that his new boss (or his wife) comes from a wealthy family. When Ms. Johnson is introduced to the manager of the Chicago

office, she notices that he has a slide-rule tie clasp, a calculator on his desk, and a set of proceedings of an electrical engineering society on his shelf. She infers privately that he has a technical background and orientation.

Although we all are, in some sense, familiar with this technique for making meanings out of data, few people consciously think about the process and about how they tend to engage in it. And most of us often use it in a casual and sloppy manner in dealing with the more inconsequential aspects of our daily activities. For purposes of self-assessment, such casualness is inappropriate. In order to achieve as accurate an assessment as possible, we need to be very careful about how we make inferences.

Drawing Inferences

Exhibits 14–1 and 14–2 display some of the tentative inferences two people independently drew after studying the written interview of a third person (Ms. Jones), along with the data on which those inferences were based. Look at each carefully and see if you can see how they are different.

Most people would agree that the analysis in Exhibit 14–2 seems a lot more sound than that in Exhibit 14–1. That is not to say that the inferences in Exhibit 14–1 are wrong or the inferences in Exhibit 14–2 are correct. We really do not have enough information to make that judgment. But there are a number of differences between Exhibits 14–1 and

Exhibit 14–1

Some Inferences Made from Written Interview Data

<i>Data</i>	<i>Inferences</i>
Ms. Jones graduated from Stanford with honors.	She is clearly very intelligent.
Ms. Jones’s writing style is very loose.	She is probably an unorganized person.
Ms. Jones is an only child.	She is probably achievement-oriented, socially withdrawn, and very tense.
Ms. Jones talks a lot about the people in her life.	She is a very people-oriented and popular person.

Exhibit 14-2

Some Inferences Made from Written Interview Data

<i>Data</i>	<i>Inferences</i>
The five periods in Ms. Jones's life which she says were the most "dull and boring" (see page 2, paragraph 2; page 10, paragraph 1; and page 14, paragraph 2) all have one thing in common—she is not in contact with any or many people.	Interacting with people is probably an important source of stimulation for Ms. Jones.
The only "hard" quantitative subject Ms. Jones says she took in high school or college was math, and she says she didn't like it at all (see page 5, paragraph 1; and page 16, paragraph 2).	Ms. Jones does not have strong quantitative skills.
The four people Ms. Jones lists as being "the most influential" in her life are: her father, her tenth-grade teacher, one of her summer job bosses, and her grandmother (page 20).	Ms. Jones probably relates well to authority figures and can be influenced by them.
Ms. Jones grew up in a middle-class family and twice makes references to "not wanting to be poor" (see page 1, paragraphs 3 and 4; and page 30, paragraph 1).	Money is not unimportant to Ms. Jones.

14-2 that tend to give one more confidence in Exhibit 14-2.

First of all, the "data" in Exhibit 14-2 are a lot clearer and more specific than those in Exhibit 14-1.

Exhibit 14-2 states, with some precision, exactly what it is in Ms. Jones's written interview that has led to such inferences. Exhibit 14-1 is more vague in this regard. One is left wondering how much "a lot" of talk about people is, and what is meant by a "very loose writing style." Is it not possible that Ms. Jones's writing style is fairly typical, but that the person who created the inference in Exhibit 14-1 has a very structured writing style—so what is perhaps typical looks "loose" to such a person?

It is easy to lose sight of the actual data in a written interview and end up analyzing instead your own impressions of the data. We've seen people who, after expressing a strong belief in the validity of a set of inferences, were unable to point to a single specific piece of supporting information in the written interview. They had been performing a reasonably interesting analysis—but it was based mostly on their own impressions, not on the specific information provided by the other person. So it is important that you have specific data clearly in mind when you are drawing an inference. When you are trying to communicate your logic to another person, it is essential that you reveal not only your conclusions or inferences, but also your data. Otherwise, the other person may not be able to understand how you got from a set of data (which he or she may see very differently) to a set of inferences, and decide that you "have jumped to conclusions."

A second obvious difference between Exhibits 14-1 and 14-2 relates to a number of questionable assumptions. All inferences are based on one or more assumptions; some inferences are more reasonable than others. Exhibit 14-2's inferences seem more reserved and conservative (and reasonable!) because they assume less. Assumptions are like icebergs, in the sense that at first we may only see their tips (in the conclusions we draw). We encourage you in your self-assessment and in your discussions with others to be continually on the alert for iceberg assumptions and to challenge them to make sure the conclusions and inferences you reach are conservatively logical. As you move now into a more intensely inductive phase of the self-assessment process, practice careful consideration of the relationship between data, assumption, and inference.

To get from "Ms. Jones is an only child" to "She is probably achievement-oriented, socially withdrawn, and very tense," one has to assume a great deal. Of course, the inference could be true, but only if a large number of implicit assumptions are also

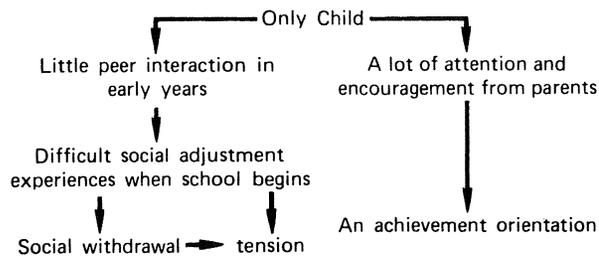
true.¹ Even the first inference in Exhibit 14-1, which assumes a great deal less, is still based on at least the following assumptions:

1. That Ms. Jones really did graduate from Stanford *with* honors.
2. That “intelligence” is a definable, measurable human attribute.
3. That one’s “intelligence” is fairly stable over time—it doesn’t go up or down drastically in a month, for example.
4. That the “intelligence” one displays does not vary greatly from situation to situation or task to task.
5. That to graduate with honors from Stanford, one *must be* intelligent. That is, that all the other possible explanations as to why one could graduate with honors (work hard, bribe the dean) are impossible.

People often feel rather uncomfortable when forced to look at the assumptions implicit in their inferences. We often treat our inferences as if the assumptions were known truths, when they seldom are. All five of the assumptions implicit in the inference concerning Ms. Jones’s intelligence have some probability of being accurate, but that probability is significantly less than 1.0.

The more assumptions that are not known truths

¹Very often when people develop inferences that seem to be based on a lot of assumptions, the reason is that they carry a “model” (often preconsciously) around with them based on their own experiences or something they were taught in school. For example, the person who inferred that because Jones is an only child she is socially withdrawn, tense, and achievement-oriented could have been applying a model of child development learned in school. Such a model might be represented as:



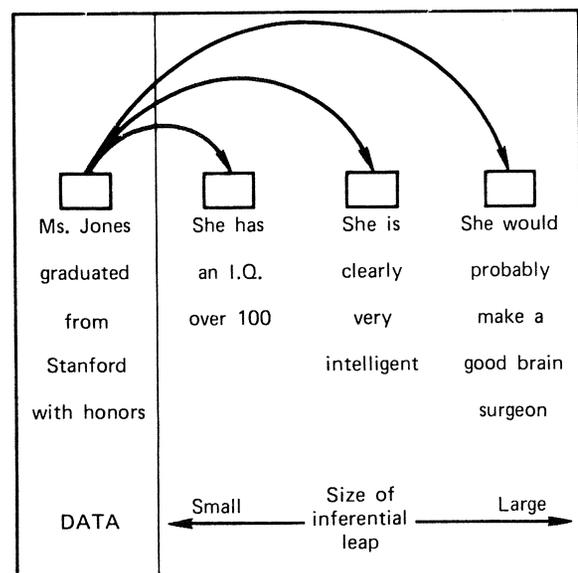
Such a simplified model of a complex phenomenon may be approximately true in some cases, but certainly not in all. Or then again, our data analyst might well have been an only child who had grown up socially withdrawn, tense, and achievement-oriented! That is, the analyst could have been identifying with the data and projecting onto them without even being aware of what was happening. In either case, it would not be unusual for the analyst to believe the inference was “obviously true” and to vigorously defend it until forced to identify the assumptions implicit in the logic that led to the inference.

that one makes, and the lower the probability that each of those assumptions is correct, the more one engages in what we might call an “inferential leap.” Starting with the datum about Ms. Jones graduating from Stanford, inferential leaps of various sizes are shown in Exhibit 14-3.

As the diagram implies, the larger the “leap,” the further it takes you from the data. Getting too far away from one’s data can be dangerous in self-assessment. Throughout the book, we will remind you to stay close to the data—to let the data do the talking—so that your inferences are clearly connected to the data. We mean “clearly connected” not only to you, but also to another reasonable person who might look at the data you have generated and the inferences you have drawn. In fact, getting someone else whom you trust and respect to look at your data and inferences is an excellent means of checking your own logic and of uncovering large inferential leaps that may be based more on your biases, desires, and “unfounded” assumptions than they are in the data you generated. We will talk more about how to go about getting someone else to look at your data and inferences later.

A third difference between Exhibits 14-1 and 14-2 can be found in the nature of the data used. Exhibit 14-2 never starts with a single “observation” (such as “Ms. Jones is an only child”), but with a number of observations that possibly identify a pattern. And by keeping the patterns relatively simple, the author was able to draw nontrivial inferences

Exhibit 14-3
Inferential Leaps



without making a large number of questionable assumptions.

Perhaps the single most important part of analyzing a written interview involves looking for relatively simple patterns. Does the author of the interview repeatedly talk about any particular subject or person? Does the author always (or never) quantify things that can be measured? Does the author repeatedly use a certain type of verb or adjective? Does the author always (or never) go into great detail in describing people? Objects? Events?

Through the identification of patterns, we can start to sort the peripheral and trivial from the more central and important. As any scientist recognizes, an event that occurs once tells us very little. But one that occurs again and again, in some pattern, may well tell us something central about whatever is being studied.

Identifying Patterns

Most people just “see” patterns—that is, the process of identification often occurs unconsciously. However, there are ways in which one can facilitate one’s own preconscious processes.² Understanding these can be helpful.

Perhaps the easiest technique to facilitate pattern identification is to underline or write on a separate sheet of paper anything that catches your attention when you read through the interview. On a second reading, you can begin more systematically to check whether some pattern is associated with any of those items.

Developing inferences from single bits of data can also help you to identify patterns. If you select a single datum, draw a conservative, tentative inference from it, go on to the next datum, and so on, you can then go back and look at your inferences to see if any of them seem related. If they are, the bits of data from which you generated those inferences may also be related. With a little rewording, you may be able to phrase an inference that captures the essence of several bits of data—and in so doing, identify a pattern. In the end, using a single datum as support for a pattern or theme will be logically weak, but it is a useful way to get started

²By “preconscious processes” we mean things that are a part of our mental activity that are not usually in our awareness, but which, if focused on with moderate effort, can be consciously thought about. We contrast this to “subconscious processes,” which are more difficult to bring into awareness.

drawing conservative inferences and identifying patterns.

Simple counting can be an important tool. If something seems to occur “a lot,” count exactly how many times it does occur. You may find your “sense” was very accurate, or very inaccurate. In a similar vein, if something “seems” never to occur, carefully check that out. Does it really *never* occur?

Very speculative inferences (those based on lots of questionable assumptions), although not very useful as the *product* of an analysis, can occasionally be useful in the *process* of analysis. The major value of a highly speculative inference lies in its occasional capacity to point out an unseen pattern. Having made the inference, for example, that Ms. Jones is socially withdrawn, one might then notice *for the first time* how little she talks about her relationships with people in her written interview, and that she doesn’t mention belonging to student organizations of any kind in high school or college. Or you might find just the opposite. In either case, the speculative inference led you to useful data that were previously unseen.

You will undoubtedly develop still other techniques yourself. Just keep in mind that pattern finding, like most good detective work, requires a combination of instinct, disciplined search, and time. And do not be surprised if at first you have some difficulty finding patterns. People often feel they don’t know what to look for in the data, or that they need a list of “typical patterns” to guide them. But this is not possible. There are literally an infinite variety of patterns that could be developed from a written interview. Because most of us are better versed in deductive than inductive processes, such a response is natural in the beginning.

Guidelines

In analyzing a written interview:

1. Stick closely to the data. Make sure you don’t end up analyzing something you’ve manufactured in your own head. Let the data do the talking.
2. Search for patterns. Remember that one datum alone tells you virtually nothing. But be willing to start small and build slowly. Don’t leap to conclusions without going back to check the data carefully to be certain that the conclusions are supported.
3. Be careful and explicit with your inferences. Try to be aware of your assumptions.
4. Treat all inferences as tentative rather than hard conclusions.
5. Try to be patient. Good analysis takes time.

Exercise

In the following cases, you will find Steven Taylor's and Carrie Baugh's responses to the first four questions of the written interview. These interviews are typical of most written interviews we've seen.

Now, to give you some practice in analyzing this kind of data before you begin work on your own, we would like you to answer the following questions about Taylor's and Baugh's first four responses:

1. What tentative, conservative inferences do you make about them?
2. What data do you cite to support your inferences?

As you try to answer these questions, we suggest that you try the following:

1. Read the questions and responses, underlining or making notes of things you think or feel are important as you go along.

2. List several of the data points you identified as potentially important on the Drawing Tentative Inferences Worksheet (next page). Then write down a tentative, conservative inference based on that datum. An example is given on the worksheet.
3. Clarify as well as you can the assumptions you were making that led you to the conclusions/inferences that you drew. An example is given on the worksheet.
4. After you have written a few inferences from single data points, go back through the first four responses and your inferences and attempt to collect evidence related to a single inference. Try to find as much evidence for the inferences you chose as you can.

Finally, stop and consider the strengths and weaknesses of the written interview as a data-generating device. Write these down and note the impact they have on the credibility of the data to you. Be prepared, if you are in a class setting, to discuss these strengths and weaknesses and their implications for your use of the data.

STEVEN TAYLOR'S WRITTEN INTERVIEW (PART A)

Question #1—An Account of My Life (Open-Ended Question)

1. I guess we ought to start at the beginning. I was born in Akron, Ohio, in June of 1960. I was trouble right from the beginning, refusing to come forth after thirty-seven hours of labor. I was the first for my mom, so the doctor wanted to hold off as long as possible, but they finally gave up and cut me out. I was ten pounds at birth and reputedly could be easily located by the volume of my vocalizations. My family moved often in my early years, and in fact, my father moved us while my mother and I were recuperating from our first ordeal together. So I went home to my first home in Newark, Ohio, where my father worked for the B & O Railroad as a management trainee. I have very few memories of Newark—glimpses of the breakfast area in the house and the backyard of my friend Sean's house. Sean lived on a stream filled with smooth round rocks which made the water burble and laugh as it went by. The banks were filled with all sorts of creatures to inspect and examine: frogs, grubs, night-crawlers, and all manner of things. It was a wondrous place for two small boys to wander about, and I'm

reminded of that stream whenever I'm near running water even today. I wonder whether my interest in the outdoors began all the way back then? Memories of Newark are very pleasant, even if they are mostly fuzzy now.

2. We moved next to Baltimore, although we only stayed there a short time. My mother told me about my soon-to-be brother Brian while we lived in Baltimore. We shared a red-brick, two-family house there with a middle-aged lady who had lots of crystal and glass things in her house. I remember the way the light sparkled in all directions when I was in her living room. But it was also too bright in her house, sort of a harsh light. Our house always seemed very warm and cozy. My mother has always collected primitive American furniture, and all of our houses have been decorated with wood floors (sometimes stone) with throw rugs and antique chairs and tables. I was always surprised as a boy at how other people were always afraid of hurting their furniture or staining the carpet or protecting something or other. How did these people get through the day if they were so worried about getting dirty or breaking the china or whatever? It wasn't until much later in my life that I came to realize

that having a mother who didn't mind if we ate pizza sitting on the floor or put our feet on the coffee table was a rare privilege! We always used china plates and sterling silver just like it was what most people called "everyday" dining. My parents just used what they had gotten as wedding presents, figuring it wasn't of much use sitting in a cabinet somewhere. I'm forever grateful to them for running the house like that. I think it made my brothers and I truly aware of the value of practical beauty and elegance. If you only use the "good" china and silver with guests, what kind of commentary are you delivering about your family and the friends who come around all the time and make up the fabric of your life? But where was I?

3. Baltimore. We didn't stay there too long; in fact, by the time Brian (Bubby, to me) was born, we had moved to Silver Spring in Maryland, and Dad was working in Washington. I was three when we moved to Silver Spring, and I found two good friends, Sally Johnson and Danny Frederick, who lived across the fence in back of our house. Sally was a lot of fun and liked to play all kinds of games in spite of her being a girl. Most of the other girls in the neighborhood thought there was something special about being a girl, that they should hang out with girls or do different things because they were girls, but Sally knew better. She and I were great pals, and played on the trampoline, and built forts, and went sledding in the winter. Danny Frederick (I always think of him with both names) lived next door to the Johnsons, or maybe two doors down, but it's not important. Danny was more of a thinker, and I remember him being sick a lot. He wore a hearing aid and thick glasses, but I'm not sure I really noticed until I thought back to him just now. His father was a real health nut before such a thing was fashionable. (We're still around 1963–64 here.) His father had grown up in Maine, I think, and he knew all kinds of things about plants and animals that my parents could never explain to me. The Fredericks had the world's biggest leaf and compost piles in their back yard, and Mr. Frederick was forever out there turning it or putting this or that layer on to help the process along. And, boy, did the Fredericks come up with some different things to eat! Mr. Frederick once made a dandelion salad when I was at their house. Weeird! Mr. Frederick was a crabby man, but he was fascinated by plants and gardening, and if I talked to him about those things, he was a great teacher. I think Mr. Frederick was the first person to show me (without intending to, of course) that if you could just get the conversation around to something he liked to talk about, he was a lot nicer to be around and he just seemed happier. A lot of other people in the neighborhood thought the Fredericks were just too weird to deal with, but even though they were odd, I had a lot of fun with them. The Fredericks never seemed to be a happy bunch, though, and at times the melancholy would get to be too much for me, and I'd just go back home and not see Danny for a couple of days.

4. I went to museums a lot with my mom. Washington is a great place for that, and we went all the time. Museums are wonderful places; no matter where you turn, there is something completely new to learn about. I think when I get around to raising kids, museums are places where I'd like to spend time with them. Learning about the evolution of the earth and how big the dinosaurs were gives a child a perspective on just how small mankind is in the greater scheme of things. While I couldn't fathom how long a time millions of years was (I don't think I can now either), I remember an exhibit showing the age of the dinosaurs, and the Ice Age, and various eras, with the appearance of homo sapiens way down in a little two-inch strip at the end of the exhibit, and a sign at the other end of the room marking where the formation of the earth would lie on the same timeline. It was also in Washington that I first learned about Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, and of course John Kennedy. I don't remember much about Kennedy being shot except that my father came home from work, or maybe he stayed home from work the next day. It was a very quiet day, very sad and gloomy. I remember watching Jack Ruby shooting Oswald, though, and how confused everyone was over whether that was a good thing or a bad thing.

5. I also started school in Silver Spring. Kindergarten was a very short experience for me. The principal came down (kindergarten was on a lower floor from the rest of the school) in the first week or so and gave me all these tests to take. I can't recall what the tests were, except that they involved matching up shapes and colors, I think. Anyhow, after a very short time, it was announced that I was moving into the first grade. This was a terribly traumatic move. I didn't know anybody in the first grade, and to this day I can't recall any individuals or teachers from that school, which I attended through first and second grades. In first grade, the class spent a lot of time learning to read, but I already knew how to read, so I had a little spot over at the side of the room where I sat by myself and read books. There were all kinds of books to read, and I read about all kinds of exotic foreign places. My little spot was nice; it was sunny, and nobody bothered me much, and I had plenty to do. I must have taken math with the rest of the class, but I don't remember a thing about it. I did have Sally, of course, who I think was a grade ahead of me, but my memory is that mostly I hung out by myself at school. I remember the scariest part about moving to first grade was eating lunch in the cafeteria. I went in there for the first time, and I didn't know anybody, but there were hundreds of kids in there running around and talking and making an amazing din. As I recall, I cried through lunch the first couple of times, but then it was all right.

6. We moved again just before second grade 1966—this time, to St. Paul, Minnesota. I walked to school in St. Paul, which was great fun, and it was very independent! We could even stop on the way to or

from school and buy bubble gum or squeeze pops (whatever happened to squeeze pops?) at the little store on Cosmos Avenue. I went to Grover Cleveland School, and Mrs. Bund was my teacher. St. Paul was different than other places, because everyone was so bundled up in the wintertime and each class had its own changing room. I met Alex Bell in St. Paul. Alex and I got special treatment at school because we were able to work on our math lessons on our own. We went on ahead of the class at our own speed in our own math workbooks, which was great. It was so boring to have to listen through the teacher explaining really simple problems to the rest of the class. Alex and I became great pals and played together a lot of afternoons after school. We never played organized sports together, though, because like most of my friends throughout all of school, Alex was a year and a half older than me. That fact, coupled with the fact that I inherited my father's growing pattern and developed physically much later than most guys, left me the equivalent of two or even three years behind my peer group at school in terms of physical development. I didn't fully grasp that as the reason for my difficulty in making sports teams until I was in college, and I was continually frustrated at my small size and strength compared to my friends. But that didn't stop me from playing sports, even though I seemed to get hurt more than most people. Before we leave Minnesota, I should add that it was there that I got my first ice skates, a pair of double runners that I would take with my dad down to the big ice rink in back of the school in the evenings. I was way behind most Minnesotans, of course—not getting started on skates until I was six years old—but it was my first taste of winter sports, which remain my favorites to this day.

7. In the spring of 1967, we moved again; this time to North Barrington, Illinois, a small town about fifty miles northwest of Chicago. I think of Barrington as where I spent my youth, since we stayed there from third grade through my junior year of high school, from 1967 to 1976. My folks built a house on a wooded lot of about two acres, and it was an idyllic life for a kid who likes to be outdoors. In back of our house, although our property only went back maybe a couple hundred feet, it was about a half-mile through the woods and fields before you came to the next house. Across the street from us was a row of houses, but right behind them was a swamp of maybe fifteen or twenty acres. The possibilities for exploring were pretty much endless, and my brothers and I (my youngest brother Tom was also born in D.C.; he's five years younger) built forts, and climbed trees, and made paths through the woods which only we knew about. In the winter the swamp would freeze, and we could ice skate on it. There was also a lake at the end of our block where we could fish and swim in the summer, and where we played hockey in the winter in an outdoor league. Pretty much everybody who lived near

us had kids close to our age, so we could always get up a game of football or softball, or in the evenings, play "Kick the Can" or flashlight tag.

8. I went to North Barrington Elementary through fifth grade, but when it came time to go to middle school, Barrington Middle School was overcrowded, so I went with about 200 sixth graders to an experimental school built next door to the middle school called the Lines School. The Lines School was an experimental design, and it was round, with classrooms around the outside and a library without walls in the middle. The classrooms' inner walls were sliding partitions, so that a teacher could open the back wall of the classroom and allow students to spill out into the library whenever there was independent work to be done. Lines School also had a handpicked teaching staff and a special curriculum for sixth grade, which emphasized letting each student progress at his or her own speed. Seven of us were picked out of the group to take math and English separately from the rest of the school, and we pushed ahead with amazing speed. We went so far in math, for instance, that I didn't learn anything new in math from sixth grade until sophomore year of high school, four years later. At Lines School, I also had my first taste of politics, and was elected vice-president of the school. I didn't run for president because there was this cute (real early-developing) girl who I was sure had a lock on president. She won, and so did I, but I don't think she ever forgave me for what happened next. When the election results were announced, she was applauded, and I was hoisted onto the shoulders of my classmates and carried around the outside of the room twice. When they put me down I went over and congratulated Janet, but she didn't seem overly enthused to say the least. The experience left me confused for a long time, and I learned to be careful about what I aim for and why I aim for it, because if it's not what I really want or what I think I should do, winning out has implications for others as well as for me. Am I attributing too much to these early childhood events?

9. Lines School was different than the rest of my education in the Barrington school system. At Lines, it was OK to be inquisitive, studious, scholastic. After I moved back into the mainstream schools, Barrington Middle and Barrington High, the interchange between the cliques went way down. At those schools, you were either a jock or a freak (or a nerd), or else you were just one of the rest. Of course, there were some avowed freaks who still played sports, and there were some jocks who partook of various recreational substances, and there were even some of us who were members of one group and kept up with friends in the other group, but pretty much anybody who was "cool" was in one of the two groups. I hung around mostly with jocks, but a couple of my best friends from elementary school went with the freaks, so I did some crossing over. I should add that, although I played on the

tennis and golf teams, and played Babe Ruth baseball and Pop Warner football, when I entered high school I was only 5'2" and weighed less than 100 pounds. I was younger than everyone in my class by a year and behind the normal growth schedule besides! I must have been an aggressive son of a bitch just to get noticed, much less to have been a class officer, athlete, and club president. I never connected my competitive spirit now with facing that obstacle before. I think we're getting into the real purpose of the written interview now.

10. I forgot to mention earlier that I also spent a good part of my time from about age five forward playing music. My parents started me on classical piano at age five or six, and I played for about four or five years. I had taken up the trumpet in fourth grade (age eight), and I played both for two or three years. It was at Lines School, or maybe in seventh grade, that I dropped the piano. I truly enjoyed playing the piano, but I was a very late bloomer physically, and I just didn't have the dexterity for piano. On the other hand, I was one of the best at the trumpet almost as soon as I picked it up, so when I started feeling pinched on practice time, the piano lessons went. The trumpet eventually fell to the bane of braces on my teeth, although I stayed at it for about a year with the braces on. After a couple of hundred days of bleeding lips after practice, and after falling from first chair to sixth or seventh, I gave up the trumpet and joined the tennis team. Maybe the sports urge was as much a factor as anything. There had been a growing conflict between playing music and playing sports throughout middle and high school, and I finally bagged the school band in my sophomore year. I kept up playing in the stage band for another year, but braces and conflicts between after-school practice schedules finally took the horn away from my lips. I always intended to take it up again, and I kept my silver horn (it was a fifteenth birthday gift from my parents) with me until it was stolen from a storage locker in New York in 1984. I still have a bugle, but even that is a struggle now. I keep saying it to myself, so I'll go on written record here: Someday, I'm going to take both of those instruments back up again. When? . . .

11. Where was I? Entering Middle School, I think. Barrington was a small town, but the school system gathered students from a wide radius. Middle School was located in Barrington, about six or seven miles from where we lived. Barrington Middle was a big school, with grades six–eight and probably (?) 1,500 students. I met the two friends who ended up being my only lifelong friends from Barrington while at middle school, Mike Harper and Rod Dollins. I also had my first kiss there, from Julie Bender. I was in seventh grade, she was in eighth (an older woman by two years, remember!), and we pecked each other a couple of timid times outside a Friday night sock hop at the community center. I wonder what happened to Julie

Bender? But I digress. Mike moved to Barrington from Connecticut; his family lived near mine in North Barrington, and they were also tennis fanatics. Mike and I were buds, David Harper and my brother Brian became fast friends, and Chris and my brother Tom were also tight. Needless to say, our parents became and stayed close friends, and when I was in San Francisco last week, I found Mike's sister Meghan living at my parents' house while looking for a place to live during law school. Rod Dollins also moved in seventh grade, but from Texas. Rod was a nationally ranked tennis player, and although he and Mike never became too close, the three of us spent a lot of time together over the next few years. And I had my first beer with Mike and did my first serious (deliberate) female-chasing with Rod. I was in both of their weddings, and Mike's now a lawyer in San Diego, while Rod was a Wharton MBA who moved back to Dallas to get married and go to work. Then he was killed in a boating accident. I carried his coffin three months after I attended him at his wedding. You never know how fragile the world can be until it blows up on you a couple of times.

12. The sad times were later, though. High School was the **BIG TIME** for those of us who knew everybody, played a sport, and did well in classes. Barrington High had four grades and 3,000 students, so if you were somebody at Barrington, you could really get to thinking that you were a pretty big cheese. The school had had a reputation for drugs in the years before I arrived, but things had cooled off somewhat by the time my class started. It was a stereotypical mid-western town where I lived. There was a fair-sized contingent of upper-middle-class and even a few upper-class kids from Barrington Hills, but for the most part, the kids came from families who lived in tract homes in one of the developments which had sprung up all around the area. After school, a lot of kids worked in town, and weekends were spent cruising Route 14, hitting McDonald's or the bowling alley, looking for chicks, or just getting high and driving around. (Yes, this was back when smoking dope was still considered a normal activity among my peer group.) I worked as a golf caddie and as a Little League umpire in the summers, and I refereed junior hockey a couple of nights a week during the school year. I was busy at school, too, where I was in the band and on the tennis team, as previously advertised. I was also on the student council and active in the Ski Club. The Ski Club was a big deal at BHS, with about 700 members. We went skiing one night a week in the winters and raised money throughout the year for an annual trip to Indianhead/Big Powderhorn Mountain in Upper Michigan. I wouldn't go to Indianhead now if you paid me! My perspective on skiing has been warped by too many opportunities to ski up to my waist in the champagne stuff in Utah and Colorado and the Alps. (I've gotten around a little bit since Barrington.) No anec-

dotes about life in Barrington are jumping out at me just now.

13. At the end of my junior year, I was elected president of the Ski Club over my good buddy Jeff Garber, I was signed up for all the advanced placement classes, I was gearing up for a senior year at BHS as a “big man on campus,” but my dad had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to move to Detroit and become president of a small railroad there. He and I had a long talk about whether I should stay in Barrington and live with the Harpers for my senior year, but I decided I’d rather go with the family and take my chances. Besides, a couple of the guys I’d been hanging out with were really starting to slide into some close scrapes with the law. I decided to move to Michigan, and as it turned out it was one of the best decisions I ever made. We moved the week before school started, and I actually went to school the first couple of days from a motel about a mile away from school while we were waiting for the movers to arrive and unpack our house.

14. I had become good enough at golf to make the team in Michigan, so I met those guys before the school year started, and when classes did start up, I found out that my new school was a couple of light-years ahead of Barrington High academically. I also had a crash course in self-assertiveness in my first two weeks at Andover (Bloomfield Hills Andover High School). I had to talk my way into two of the classes I wanted to take, because the prerequisites were different between the two states. And then the class ranks came out, and I was about 100th out of our class of 400 or so. At Barrington I’d been in the top five percent of my class, so this new ranking was quite a shock. I had to go through two guidance counselors, the assistant principal, and I finally ended up in the principal’s office arguing that, since Andover weighted honors classes differently than Barrington had, my grade point average and class rank would need to be calculated differently than other students. Dr. Theodore didn’t like the concept much, but he said he’d think it over and talk to me the next day. When he called me to his office the next day, though, he had a wide grin and told me how pleased he was to have a National Merit Scholarship Finalist at Andover High. He’d gotten the word during the night, and it changed his whole perspective on Steven Taylor. Funny how creating a little fame for somebody can overcome just about any size problem. Ol’ Gene Theodore didn’t know he’d created a monster, though. I was back in his office a week later after I found out that the school paper had disbanded two years earlier after he’d censored a story. I asked him whether he would agree to keep his hands off if I restarted a student paper, pointing out that a school without a student paper couldn’t really be considered a top-notch high school. Dr. Theodore saw the merits of that argument, and by the Christmas break, we had a bi-weekly student paper, uncensored. I never did tell him that my “previous stu-

dent paper experience” amounted to a write-up of a single basketball game for the BHS paper two years earlier. It didn’t matter; the paper was a big hit, and it was self-supporting by its third issue. I ended up my year at Andover with an even bigger confidence builder (not that my already oversized ego needed any more inflating by that point). Andover held a leadership retreat for some of the top students from each of the three classes, where we went off for a weekend and talked about life, leaders’ responsibilities, and our place in the greater cosmos. At the end of the retreat, the students and faculty voted on who should give the closing speech at dinner on Sunday night, and they chose me. I’d never done an impromptu speech before, especially not in front of all the student and faculty heavies at a banquet. I got through it—mentioning, of course, all the people who had helped me along the way—and got a standing ovation at the end. I was beginning to get pretty damn pompous.

15. I had made a college tour of the Ivy Leagues with my parents over spring break as a high school junior, and there was no doubt in my mind where I wanted to go to school, Cornell. It had a great academic reputation, it was in upstate New York, it owned its own ski hill and golf course, and it was the only school I visited where students I met said, “You *have* to come here, it is the *best*.” Elsewhere, students seemed to list off some pros and some cons, but in Ithaca they grabbed you by the arm and said, “You’ve *got* to come to my next class; the professor is the *greatest*.” I was sold. Unfortunately, when I applied early, I was told to wait until the regular admissions process, and then I got that awful thin envelope in the mail, and it seemed only a formality that they had bothered to keep me on the waiting list. I’d gotten into some great schools, and I even sent my deposit to Stanford, before my gloom was lifted by the arrival of the big envelope that meant I could go after all to Cornell.

16. When I got to Cornell, the Steven ego took some big hits early on. First of all, I had placed out of two terms of chemistry through taking advanced placement exams in high school, and my myopic freshman academic adviser told me I ought to move right into organic chemistry in my freshman fall term. Organic chemistry at Cornell is normally the last course in the pre-med sequence, and it was populated predominantly by sophomore and junior pre-meds. I was shark bait, and those guys chewed me up in a big way—not just in class, but in the lab, and in the dorm at night by making me a regular part of late-night beer bashes. I was a mess, and I made a big fat D in both terms for organic chemistry. Not quite up to snuff for a National Merit Finalist, you say? I was just getting started on jumping off the academic precipice. For four years in Ithaca, I experimented, I drank, I partied, I chased girls, I was a fraternity social chairman, I went to France for a term and came back and taught French, I was a disc jockey, I announced basketball games, I

ran a division of the Cornell Outing Club. I did a million things, but I rarely focused on class work, and I just ignored two whole courses and received failing grades in my major! Something was amiss, but when anybody asked, I was fine, just fine, no problems here. After all, everybody knew who I was, right? Wrong. Anyway, if I didn't always go to class, I did manage to go to some job interviews my senior year, and what do you know, these people weren't overly concerned about my grades. I had offers to come and work in advertising in Chicago, and from New York Money Center Bank to become a banker in New York. I didn't know whether either one was what "I really wanted to do." I hadn't slowed down long enough to think about that in several years. So I decided to go with New York Money Center Bank. I'd never been to New York, I thought it would be good for me to live in the big city for a while, and besides, if I didn't like it, I would have at least learned something about finance. So much for making a careful decision about my career. I remember the disappointment of the recruiter from Chicago when I called him to turn him down. One of my best friends had just called him to also reject an offer in favor of a job in New York, and he asked me to reconsider if it turned out that I didn't like banking. I also remember thinking how it seemed unfair that I had gotten these job offers with only a minimum of effort while so many of my friends had tried for these jobs and hadn't gotten them. And these were people who had done *well* in their classes at school.

17. I did graduate, in case you were wondering, and after a few weeks at home in Michigan, I went off to find my way in the world of the Big Apple. Going to work for a big bank proved to be an excellent decision. The rigorous structure and formality of the bank's nine-month training program gave me a chance to pull the rest of my life together. The training program was also a much-needed confidence builder. In spite of all my extracurricular accomplishments at Cornell, my poor academic performance had left me shaken, more so than I was to acknowledge for several years. In that way, entering a bank training program was good medicine. I was in a training group of twenty-five people, and we took classes most of every day in finance, accounting, credit analysis, international finance, economics, and business law. The work was not particularly challenging intellectually, and I found that if I applied myself in terms of putting in the hours after work, I excelled within my group. These were all strong students from good colleges, but I finished consistently in the top three or four places and was eventually one of the first three of us to be promoted to lending officer. I had always believed, even in the down days at Cornell, that I was as capable as anyone around me, even more capable than most, but doing well is satisfying, and thinking that I could do better than I was left me with a hollow feeling. Acting like I was doing better than I was proved exhausting after

a time. Realizing what a toll that exacted may have been one of the great revelations of my life to that time.

18. I made some fast friends in the training program. Let me rephrase that, since I haven't talked to even one of them in a couple of years. I made a couple of close friends in the training program, but the relationships were passing. As I matured (I had been avoiding that for a while), I found that my interests were different than those of most of my associates at the bank. In any case, the training program was a chance for me to get back on my feet, and I grabbed at it. I also met a woman I was to later ask to marry me, although after a year of cohabitation, we canceled our wedding plans. I canceled our wedding plans. Looking back, I think the urge to get married was largely another attempt to stabilize my life after the wild years at Cornell. Janet was (is) a wonderful girl, and we had some great times together, but living together magnifies any differences in two people's basic priorities like no amount of talking about your differences can do. In our case, each of us was expecting the other to change attitudes on religion (Janet was a conservative Jew), lifestyle (she was ready for the suburbs; I needed more diversity, not less), and other things which just don't change as rapidly or as easily as we had naively assumed they could. We lived together from January 1983 to February 1984 in a beautiful brownstone in Park Slope, Brooklyn. I moved back to Manhattan and went on with my work, while Janet quit the bank and became an aerobics instructor at Club Med in Martinique. She has stuck with it and is now a manager of a new Club Med in Florida, with aspirations to move to the headquarters office in Paris. We didn't talk much for a couple of years, but we established contact again a couple of years later, and I think we both agree that things have worked out for the best.

19. At work, after the training program, I was assigned to the Energy Division, the hot area to be in 1982! I also was very lucky to be assigned to work for a Wharton MBA who ignored the NY Money Center Bank (MCB) tradition of handing out dollars and promotions based on seniority. Joe was a believer in rewarding your stars and dumping your dogs, and even though those terms were, I believe, from a portfolio management class, Joe applied them with singular success in his human resource management. This was a boon for me, as I worked hard and was rewarded with fast promotions and larger-than-normal raises, but it was hard to watch co-workers of six and seven years' experience told to seek positions elsewhere because they "just weren't keeping up with the program." I learned a tremendous amount about finance and deal work from Joe, but I probably learned at least as much from watching him deftly parry any political maneuvering which came at him. He had an admirable ability to ignore those attempts to undermine him which he believed would fail, but to bring the important crises out into the open for discussion.

Working in the oil and gas business was great fun while the boom lasted, but sometime in 1983–84 it became apparent that the bloom might be off the rose more than temporarily, and by 1985 I was spending a large proportion of my time working out problems with various credits. I was one of the fortunate few who, for whatever reason, had not made any big lending blunders, so I was kept on as times got leaner.

20. There were several opportunities during 1984 and 1985 for me to move to other positions in the bank, but each time I went through the interview process I was left flat by the prospect of committing to several more years in that mammoth corporate hierarchy. Each time, I came up with some other excuse not to move, but when I passed on the chance to go to Columbia or Wharton on the bank's tab, it occurred to me that I ought to consider a new occupation. The reason I didn't accept the offer of time off with pay to go to business school was that the offer was contingent on signing up for a minimum of three years' service to the bank after graduation. When I finally admitted to myself that that was my true feeling, I began a job search. It just so happened that my mother was diagnosed as having breast cancer at about the same time in 1985, and I decided that if I was going to change jobs, it made sense to look for something in San Francisco, where my parents now live. I love the Bay Area, and in the back of my mind I'd been thinking about living out there since my first visit in 1982. I also wanted to seek an opportunity to work in a private firm, where all of the hoopla over rabbit-from-the-hat quarterly earnings didn't have to be created again and again. Anyone at MCB with good common sense knew that the bank had been sliding for at least two or three years, yet every quarter the company would sell a building or liquidate a little more of the bond portfolio and announce a smooth continuation of upward-trending profits. After a while, it begins to offend your sensibilities, and you either become a tremendous cynic or you get out. I elected to pull the ripcord.

21. My first efforts at landing a job in San Francisco went nowhere, and after two trips to the area with several interviews but no victories, I was preparing to resign from MCB and just head west. I had already spoken with my immediate boss about my plans, and while he was disappointed to see me go, he was quite supportive. I spoke to him before formally resigning out of a sense of personal obligation, since he'd just promoted me to AVP and given me two analysts and a couple of big new accounts. One week before I was going to make it official, I had a phone call from one of the firms I'd interviewed with in San Francisco, who had previously told me that they couldn't hire anybody without three or four years' real estate experience. Well, things had changed, as three of their analysts had quit in the space of three months, and they were now interested in talking to me. I flew out again, we came to an agreement on a package that

gave a substantial pay increase with a shot at an even bigger bonus, and we were off and running.

22. The move to San Francisco was a turning point in my life, and I sensed the possibilities as I made preparations to leave New York. At my new job, I would be working directly for one of the partners in a respected real estate investment company with a reputation for giving its employees as much freedom and responsibility as they could handle. I was moving to San Francisco, where I could expand on the mild fitness program I had begun in New York, and I was stepping out from the shelter of my group of college friends which still surrounded me in New York. I was going to be spending time with my parents for the first time in about nine years, but in many ways this was a chance to start anew with them, to abandon the thrust-and-parry relationship we had fallen into as I went through high school and college as an eldest child. For the first time, I also expected to be able to save some money and begin building toward a financial future (Darden was soon to relieve me of that notion). All of these things energized me like I hadn't been energized in years, and through leaving New York and moving to California, I was able to break back through to the entrepreneurial, confident, and happy person I'd lost somewhere in the years since high school. I was able to put a balance back into my life that had been missing for a long time, and my time in California turned out to be one of the best years yet.

23. Even though I decided to apply to business school after only four months at Bear Realty, I enjoyed the work while I was there. My decision to return to graduate school was, as much as anything else, a realization that I had never fully developed my intellectual capabilities or satisfied those yearnings at Cornell, and that I needed to have a chance to do that, before I proceeded on with the rest of my life. I had really hoped to stay in the Bay Area and go to Stanford, but both the Stanford and Harvard admissions offices told me that in spite of 99th percentile board scores, glowing recommendations, and strong personal essays, they just couldn't overcome crappy undergraduate grades. So in a sense, I owed Darden a strong performance when I arrived here. I'm sure that whatever faculty read my application had to take a deep breath and say, let's take him anyway, and I appreciated that and was grateful for their making that extra effort on my behalf. As things have turned out, I truly believe that I have been happier at Darden than I would have been at those *other* business schools.

24. Well, there you have the rough overview. I had a rough time knowing where to cut this back. For better or worse, my memory is such that I could recite verbatim hundreds of conversations I've had over the years, places I've been to, meals I've eaten, and hundreds of other experiences, many of them I'm sure as important as some of the stories I've related here. But for Pete's sake, let's get on to question #2!!!

Question 1 (Open-ended Question)

1. I suppose I'll start at the beginning—usually a good place to begin. I was born in San Francisco, California, at Saint Mary's Hospital. I am the second child of three. Dad was finishing up his teaching credentials when I was born, or had just begun teaching at the high school. Mom had her hands full with my brother Jake and me. It's funny I start with San Francisco and teaching; both have been so instrumental in my life! My father's influence, especially. He is such a phenomenal teacher! His students adore him! Education was always stressed in my life; I *never* remember not considering college! And San Francisco, a city that holds such wonderful, wonderful memories, and truly a sense of love for its tolerance, beauty, and culture. Perhaps knowing my life began there explains why I am so strongly drawn to come "home" to San Francisco.

2. We moved to San Jose, California, when I was very young—and have lived there ever since. I really don't remember all that much about my early years—only trivial little events that seem so clear they could have happened yesterday. Like, Jake and I were playing catch when I was about five (he was six). He threw the ball on top of my dresser by accident. Being "Ms. I-can-do-it-all-by-myself" (a trait I still have), I climbed up to get the ball . . . and subsequently had the entire dresser crash onto my little body!! I must have been knocked out, because my next memory is of Dad holding me over the kitchen sink, splashing water on my face, and yelling, "Oh, God! Let her be alive!!"

3. So much for silly vignettes. I went to a Catholic grammar school from first through eighth grades—an important influence in my life, looking back, but how I hated it!! Going to a small school, with forty students in your class, together for eight years! Yuck! Everyone knew everything about you, and you were stuck in this *mold*. And I was one of those kids picked on—"Miss shy, homely little Italian girl with the hairy arms and legs!" Even now I shudder, thinking back.

4. I was smart, though, and good in sports. Being smart was good, 'cause Mom said "not to worry about those stupid girls in class; they're just jealous." It sounded good, anyway. What really sticks out in my mind during this time was learning! I was so fascinated by all the ideas and history of the world. And the

teachers for the most part were great! Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Bilecky, Sister Maureen, Sister Theresa—I can remember them all very clearly.

5. Perhaps my most favorite teacher at this time was Mrs. Gwen. She is a lively, spunky, free-spirited woman who obviously *loved* kids. She taught sixth, seventh, and eighth grade math, science, and Spanish—all subjects I liked and had an aptitude for. Especially math—she made it all seem easy and important to know.

6. By seventh grade, I was becoming more open and talkative. My confidence level really grew. A few reasons come to mind: I was chosen to be a cheerleader, some boys had crushes on me, and I finally had begun to master the piano. The cheerleading incident seems so funny to me now—running around yelling silly little cheers and performing little dance steps around the football field or basketball court. And the nine of us girls getting together to practice, and gossip, and mostly talk about boys. It was strange, but when I got to high school, I wanted no part of it!

7. I mentioned the piano above. I had been taking lessons for the past several years, since I was seven (until college). When I was around twelve, I could start to play most things I wanted to, and my friends thought it was *so* neat that I could play songs they heard on the radio! Although Mom wouldn't believe it, I actually enjoyed my lessons and trying to master the tough classical songs. I just had a hard time finding time to practice. Mom and I had this deal, where she'd set the timer (after we ate dinner) for one hour, and I'd practice until I heard the buzz. It worked well, most of the time. (Plus, I found a system: after playing a song a few times, I could sneak into the kitchen and move the timer up five minutes, and nobody realized it! Like they didn't know. I guess even back then I needed to feel in control of my time and destiny.)

8. Thinking back to piano lessons somehow reminds me of summer. . . . How I *loved* summer! (especially during middle school and high school). My friends and I would go to the neighborhood school pool everyday and splash around, listening to the radio full blast. Even now, when I hear certain songs, it takes me right back to the pool and that place in time. Anyway I *loved* the heat and getting a great tan. . . . I was lucky, I just got browner and browner. I always teased my friends who needed tons of sunblock and

junk. I was “All Natural.” We’d have tan contests, which was tough, ‘cause most of my friends were Mexican, Portuguese, or Oriental. But we always joked about it and enjoyed just being so lazy!

9. I used to daydream a lot back then—something I still do on occasion. Mostly, wanting to be an actress or singer, up there wowing the audience with my dramatic entry, romantic flirtations, or sexy singing voice. Sometimes, it was to go on a daring, dangerous adventure—like an African safari or some sort of Huck Finn adventure. Then I’d snap back into reality, realizing I still had to finish up some homework for that day.

10. Although I really liked my friends, I also liked to be alone and to be with my family. I’ve always fought off the feeling of “group think,” or feeling pressure to think like my friends or some acceptable way. Sometimes friendships can be so confining. To this day, I am this way! I have very few close friends, and tons of acquaintances whom I enjoy having fun with and kidding around with. But I’ll commit to very few. It’s something I’m working towards improving about myself—not letting friendships come and go.

11. Family, on the other hand, is a completely different matter. I come from an extremely tight-knit, open, intensely loving family. My parents are completely devoted to their children and have always sacrificed to give us “the best.” I’ll start with Dad. Dad is one of the most creative and talented persons I’ve ever met, and one of the most sensitive, thoughtful, and giving as well. He is definitely the stable force of our family—a wonderful listener! He is independent and an “I can do it” person. When I was young, Dad made all of us kids the most elaborate Halloween costumes you could imagine—scary witches, mummies, cats, princesses, even R2D2 for my sister one year! Prior to becoming a teacher, he was a tailor! And he always made us kids great clothes. In fact, he made my wedding gown this summer, and all six bridesmaids’ dresses! I think back on my dad’s life with much interest and respect: Second of nine children born to a poor Italian farmer in Madera, California. Was a self-taught tailor and opened his own shop at age seventeen. Went into the Coast Guard. Was in the Catholic seminary for two years—almost became a priest but stopped short because he truly wanted a family. Went to college on a Vet fund, decided to be an English and Latin teacher. Met my mom in college, got married during that time.

12. Dad was always really creative; his students loved him, and many still keep in touch with him! He used to advise a lot of clubs, have meetings at our house, and plan receptions. I remember the Latin club had a huge drama they put on; Dad choreographed and directed it! The students came over twice a week to practice. Later in life, when I was around fourteen, Dad decided he wanted to fulfill his lifelong dream to build his own cabin near Lake Tahoe, California. So he spent two years reading every electrical, plumbing,

carpentry “How-To” book on the market and took advantage of his summers off to build it—with the help of my family and friends! We all learned how to make cupboards, nail in sheet rock, build a chimney, and put in a toilet! It was a wonderful time in all our lives, I think! So many hilarious things happened—like the practice toilet flush, which left water cascading down the stairway into the garage! Or the pan that exploded into flames, which we had to throw out the window, then chase down the hill to extinguish. Lord, we still look back and laugh about those days!!

13. For all his talents, I worry about Dad now. I think he *hates* the thought of growing old and having to depend on someone else. He has accomplished so many important things in his life, touched so many people; yet, he feels somehow that he should have done more. Sometimes he seems so sad, now that us kids are all grown and out of the house. I really hope he and Mom begin to treat themselves with trips and doing things they enjoy.

14. My mom is a great complement to my dad, and very different. Mom is quiet, almost shy around new people, yet a very strong person inside. She always supported Dad’s ideas and activities, and was quite a worrier. Her family is her #1 priority. She fiercely guards it; we tease her sometimes, calling her a “she-bear” (no, she doesn’t particularly appreciate the comment). The point is, she felt each of our little pains and triumphs, and always pushed us toward excellence. It was very important to Mom that we all get college educations fully supported by the family. When she was growing up, she was told she didn’t have to go to college, she was very pretty, and would find a good husband to support her. Mom, as a result, worked her way through school, with virtually no support from her parents, even though they paid for her brother’s schooling. It was so important for me and my sister to go to good schools and improve ourselves.

15. I’ve heard about competitions between mother and daughter. It’s incomprehensible to me, given the strong support Mom always had for most things I’ve done. Mom is also *extremely* stubborn!! I know I’ve picked up some of that myself. As a result, we’ve certainly had our major standoffs! Especially concerning boys: nobody was ever good enough, or treated me well enough, etc. I think we have very different ideas about certain aspects of personal relationships, even now. It is so important to me to be independent yet supported, cuddled and hugged but not babied, and respected for my accomplishments and abilities, yet also to lead a somewhat traditional life. (My dad and my husband are very different, indeed. I think I’m a lot like my dad, and Mark is actually somewhat like my mom, although *neither* would agree. Dad might, and he would definitely be amused.)

16. I remember back when I was sixteen and I broke up with my first major boyfriend—absolutely in love, so I thought, and that it would last forever. When

we did break up, I was heartbroken, and my pride was shattered! Mom was so sympathetic; I remember she just held me and cried with me. And she let me have a sip of brandy! Wow! I remember thinking that, yes, I am getting on toward being an adult and that I should handle this more maturely and philosophically! Mom was there, protecting me, until I was able to do that.

17. Now, when we talk on the phone, our relationship is so different—ever since the middle of college, actually. We sit there like best friends, giggling about things that have occurred in each other's lives, our thoughts on certain people and events! My friends would come in and think I was talking to an old hometown friend! I think our roles were so less obvious (as mom and daughter) over the phone. When I was back home, though, we always seemed to revert back into those roles.

18. My brother was another important person in my life, although we've grown apart since he moved away. We were really close through most of high school. He was one year older than I, good-looking, and popular. All my girlfriends wanted to date him! We had some fun double-dates. Jake is a very interesting person; he really loves the mountains and down-to-earth people. I think he hates the thought of me running in circles he perceives as shallow or selfish. I wish he knew how neat so many of the people I know are. But, through thick and thin, we've always stood up for each other! He said the most *beautiful* things to me and my husband in our wedding video. I was truly touched! He talked about never losing the passion, and to work really hard to make each other happy! His sincerity and love were so apparent (and his pride in me) that I was speechless when I first heard it! (and that's no small feat, believe me.) He picked up the stubbornness we all did!

19. Finally, my sister, Mary, is eight years younger than me. Although there is somewhat of an age difference, we are very close—probably closer than I am to any other woman. Although she's just eighteen, she is very mature, perceptive, and straightforward. She was the cutest kid—a real tomboy, just like me. Jake taught her how to throw one hell of a curve ball! She is the most athletic of the family and has a natural talent for tennis. We used to play together, but now she's in a completely different league.

20. Mary and I have always used each other as sounding boards or to let off steam. I feel like I could tell her anything. Yet, I also want to protect her from the world and make sure she's always happy! She is one person I really, really miss not seeing on a regular basis anymore.

21. I feel like I should go on about the important role she plays in my life. However, I think it suffices to say that I love and admire her, and I am proud to have her as my sister.

22. Boy, did I digress!! Well, my family has always

been my source of strength; I go home as often as I can, now that I'm far away. And when I come back from being home, I somehow feel renewed!

23. I'll get back to my chronology. High school was one of the best times of my life. I really felt I bloomed then. Coming from a small Catholic school, I was so excited by the prospect of meeting so many new people and being able to break out of any previous molds. Looking back, it's funny. The girls in grammar school who were so important were really nobodies in high school. They had nobody to boss around. I loved the sense of freedom I felt, and the acceptance.

24. High school could have been tough for me, but it was not at all. You see, my dad was a counselor at the school, my mom was a registrar there, and my big brother was also there to watch over me. Fortunately, the kids all liked Dad a lot, and Jake kept the creeps away. Also, I think the guys were always extra respectful of me as a result. (I'm surprised anyone dared date me!)

25. It was in high school I gained my self-confidence and openness. I did very well in school and became very active in sports and extracurricular stuff. I enjoyed organizing stuff, as well as working hard to see something done. And once I started racking up accomplishments, I began to thrive on it. I think recognition and respect are very important to me. I like being in the spotlight!

26. Tennis had a lot to do with my confidence. Our school had a great coach! My freshman and sophomore years, I played volleyball and softball and badminton. But during the middle of my sophomore year, Miss Mills (the coach) convinced me to take up tennis. She gave me lessons during lunchtime . . . and I loved it!! The action, the strategy involved, and the concentration it demanded . . . also, the competition! First, it was competition against myself to get better; then it was to make the team and play singles my first year instead of doubles! I had a goal—and, as I usually do, I focused in on it!! I started playing at 6:00 before school, and at practice after school, as well as at lunch!

27. It was a game I loved to play and had some penchant for! And I made my goals. My coach got a big kick out of me; I would stomp around the court, intensely concentrating, acting as if the match was a life-or-death situation while I was playing. Our team won pennants those two years, so we had pretty good crowds watching. I played number two singles and lost only once in regular play! I thrived on the competition, sizing the player up, and trying my hardest to reach every ball I could. I beat girls I had no business beating just based on heart and willpower.

28. One particular match really stands out. I was playing Kim Henderson (I'll never forget her name); she was the girl who had beaten me during the early part of the season. I was so determined to beat her. She was

this little rich kid, “Miss blonde and proper,” raised on the country club circuit (her own private coaches, etc.); she looked down on our school and its tennis players.

29. It was the last game of the season, my senior year. . . . I had to beat her. The game started out close; we each sized each other up and tried to find weaknesses. I had to keep focusing on the game, the stroke, and *not* her!!

30. During the third set, we were tied at five all. We had split sets, so this was the deciding set . . . and I saw I had her rattled. She asked for line judges, explaining it wasn't my calls or anything, but she just didn't want to have to think about calling the lines. I think it was a psych-out try. But it made me feel even stronger and more focused; I felt a rush of energy and knew I was going to beat her!

31. Then, the football team was let out of practice, and they had lined up to watch our various matches. They were pretty supportive, and I felt all the cards were in my hand. I won the next two games easily—and therefore the set!! It was a high, a great culmination to my career as a tennis player. I had so much energy I couldn't sleep that night. Boy, did that feel great!

32. My favorite subjects in high school included math and science. The teachers were challenging and obviously enjoyed their work. I was able to get ahead in math by taking a summer school course—and ended up in calculus my senior year. It was a small class, only six students. Tim Stevens, our teacher, helped us prepare for the AP exam, which could get you college credits if you scored high enough. Mr. Stevens talked up college *a lot*, about all the choices available. When I was applying, he wrote one of my letters of recommendation. Mrs. Church, my English teacher for two years, also wrote one. I *loved* her! She had gone to Stanford and encouraged me to apply. She had such a dramatic flair; when we had to read Shakespeare, she made us *act* out the scenes, in today's translation. (I remember her saying, “What did he mean by that? Say it in English, I never did understand that “to be” stuff!”)

33. When I started applying for college, I really had a narrow scope, looking back. I must have had someone upstairs looking out for me; things always fell into place. I decided to apply to Stanford, UC Davis [University of California—Davis], and USF [University of San Francisco]. I didn't even *think* of going outside California. I figured I'd go to Davis, which had a strong biology/math program, and a lot of my friends went there. My senior year I visited with a bunch of them. It was sort of overwhelming—so big! I applied to USF because my dad had gone there. He always talked about it! And I *loved* San Francisco—wouldn't that be fun?

34. I applied to Stanford almost on a lark. Mrs. Church told me all about it and how much opportunity existed there. Our librarian, Kristie Powers, also had

attended Stanford. She was a good friend of our family, and really funny! She thought a lot of me and decided to take me on a visit. I remember it was in March, and I took off a Friday. I was ambivalent about going, because I didn't know if I had been accepted and didn't want to fall in love with the school and then be turned down.

35. I remember that day so clearly. It was a gorgeous, blue, clear spring day! Kristie drove up Palm Drive, the grand entrance to the school, and already I knew I'd *love* it! She was more a “partier” type than I, and so she took me around to all the “good” places! Since the day was so warm, students were *everywhere*, lying out in the sun, getting together to plan their weekend. We went by the Lagunita Lake, and saw mobs of people listening to a band up there. The multitude of activity around me was so exciting! As we walked around the campus, Kristie told me stories of her and her husband's adventures while undergrads. She was always getting herself into funny circumstances. I remember feeling so good and really enjoying myself. We went to lunch at a place which was the big hangout after the football games.

36. Anyway, I came home with tee shirts for everyone and my mind made up that, if I got into Stanford and could afford it, I'd go!

37. My dad was kind of ambivalent about my desire to go to Stanford. I think he thought of it as a “rich kids” school, something I definitely was *not*; generally, people are not impressed with East San Jose, where I grew up, but I wouldn't have wanted to live anywhere else as a kid!

38. I was lucky; I had a lot of scholarships awarded to me (I entered a few writing contests and won over \$2,500, applied to some through local business and educational associations, and was awarded a California grant). I had been working part-time at the local drugstore since I was fifteen, so I had a bit of my own money saved up. All in all, given the scholarship money, it would have cost my family the same to send me to UC Davis or Stanford.

39. The week before I heard from Stanford, my family was attending a wedding for one of our relatives. I remember the cousins were all sitting around at dinner. One cousin asked me where I was applying. When I told her Stanford, she said, “Oh, I don't know if you can get in there. You have to have straight As.” I replied, “Well, I do have that.”

Her: “But you also have to be president of the school and really active in extracurricular activities.”

Me: “Well, I'm pretty involved.”

Her: “I still think it's nearly impossible.”

Me: (To myself) I'm gonna get in, in spite of your stupid comments. (Outwardly, I think I just shrugged and laughed about it, and said that Davis is a great school.)

40. The acceptance letter came on April Fool's Day—how appropriate! I was so excited! I immediately sent my acceptance back!! I felt like all I had worked for, all the focus on school and the discipline to avoid the parties and stuff, paid off. I'm sure the rest of the year I was walking on a cloud!

41. My senior ball was fun! My brother came down from his freshmen year at Humboldt State to go with one of my friends. We set up a third friend, and I went with his roommate, who I had a crush on. We girls cooked a big Italian meal before the prom, with red checkered tablecloths and everything! I felt pretty at the ball—all dressed up, with my closest friends, and with a cute “older” guy!! We drove out to the beach afterwards, and Mom and Dad had breakfast waiting when we got home! It was weird being out so late with Mom and Dad's approval. Normally, we had strict curfews.

42. The summer before I started my freshman year was very carefree! I played a lot of tennis and worked at the drugstore. It was probably one of my most lazy summers; I wanted to enjoy my family and friends before heading off to school.

43. The first day of Stanford orientation seems like yesterday in some ways! What a day! Mom and Dad and I loaded up a van that Dad had borrowed from a friend. We put in all my belongings! That morning, I was petrified; all my self-confidence was out the window. Usually, when I get nervous or scared, I become very talkative. I was so scared I couldn't talk. We drove the thirty miles to Stanford in absolute silence. My Mom and I look back and laugh about that day—me, sitting with the potted plant Mom had bought, in the back of the van, staring out the window. Mom and Dad later said they felt so bad for me; I looked like I was going to the hospital instead of to school. Perhaps my biggest fear was meeting my roommate, and surviving my classes.

44. Anyway, we arrived there, and I calmed way down. The dorm had a welcoming committee that helped me move in and made us feel very much at home. There were lots of nice, smiling faces around. My roommate was already there—an outgoing, friendly, fun girl named Julie; we got along immediately!

45. I forgot to mention the van incident. Once we got off Highway 101 onto Embarcadero Road, our van decided that it would stay only in first or second gear—no reverse, nothing! We ended up going fifteen miles per hour down the street and had to avoid all situations where we might have to use reverse! What a nightmare.

46. From day one, I loved college. My freshman dorm was especially close, and I felt I had so many opportunities to grow. Most everyone was bright, and each person had their special quality that added to the uniqueness of the school.

47. The workload was fairly intense (but not by

Darden standards), but I remember my first quarter as being more about developing new friendships and becoming comfortable in the new setting than anything else. The football games were a big deal, as were the weekly parties around campus.

48. I liked most of my classes, except *chemistry*—it still leaves a bad taste in my mouth! I had entered Stanford with dreams of becoming a geneticist (yes, a geneticist)! And, yes, chemistry was a big part of the program in genetics. Well, I hated *everything* about chemistry: the students in there were more cutthroat than the average class, and the subject matter just didn't click in my head. As far as I was concerned, it was a foreign language. Well, I worked my buns off in that class! The first test, I totally blanked! I had never done that before, ever (nor again)! I had studied until the early morning hours to prepare, and I must have overdone it! Well, let's just say each chemistry class was a chore!

49. My grades first quarter were okay; a few A's, B+'s, B's, and one B-, in chemistry. I have to tell you that I was so proud of my chemistry grade—I didn't want a C. My first-quarter grades were worse than I had ever done, but I was still rather proud of them. I also knew I had not completely applied myself, given I spent a lot of time getting to know my classmates.

50. Second quarter of my freshman year was sort of a turning point for me at Stanford, for a variety of reasons. Coming back from Christmas break, I had decided to totally apply myself to studying—go all out! I wanted to see how well I could do if I really went for it! If I did the same as last quarter, then I knew the extent of my abilities and could adjust my time accordingly, but how well could I do? Secondly, I carried 19 units that semester; besides the “normal” load, I added economics to my class list, and I had the next chemistry class.

51. As I said before, chemistry was not in my blood. It was still foreign to me; I couldn't pick up the concepts! About two weeks into the quarter, I had come to a tough realization: I really didn't want to be a geneticist, or a doctor, even though “everyone” said I'd be a great one! Now, a subject that intrigued me was economics! It made a lot of sense to me, based on my math background, and combined sociology, psychology, and math. I really enjoyed it! The nineteen credits was too much; I had to drop a class, and it came down to chemistry vs. economics. I agonized over it, talked it over with my parents, and finally realized I had to *enjoy* my work. So I dropped chemistry. I felt as though the world was lifted from my shoulders and *never* regretted it!

52. I also began to date a fellow in my dorm, Tom Walker. Tom was kind of a preppie, from Chicago. He was very nice and a lot of fun! He is probably one of *the* smartest people I've ever known. He is able to absorb concepts more easily than anyone I

know!! We dated seriously for over two years (I'll get back to that later). Anyway, Tom went to the library to study every evening after dinner, from 6 to 11. He had a set routine, and a bunch of people from the dorm went over together. He got me going with him. The library was much quieter than my room, and I could really concentrate on studying, away from the dorm distractions.

53. I plowed through, every night, and got into a steady routine—studying a few hours before dinner at home and after dinner at the library with Tom. A few times a week, we'd go get ice cream at Swensen's afterward, getting there just before it closed. The poor people who worked there probably hated us!

54. The hard, focused work paid off that semester: I pulled off one B+ and four A's. I felt that I did have the ability to excel at the school; I just had to work harder and study longer than most people! And you get smarter about what to study—what's important. I did well throughout my career at Stanford and was proud of my academic achievement. I *could* do it!

55. Tom was my serious relationship at Stanford. We dated from the middle of freshman year to the beginning of my senior year. For the most part, it was a great relationship. He is a very special person, who had a lot of endearing qualities. One thing about us that was really different was Tom's need to be part of a group and go along with their ideas, and my need to remain independent, for the most part, from our friends.

56. Tom was also a great musician; he played bass for the Jazz Band, and he and some friends started a band to play at parties around school. During freshman and sophomore years, it was mostly Tom and Mike, one of Tom's best friends. They'd sit around the dorm playing, but it wasn't a major commitment. My junior year, it became a full-fledged commitment, with five band members, etc.

57. During this time, our relationship seemed to be going stale. We had always allotted each other a lot of room, since we each had our set of friends and different things we liked to do, but the band thing got out of hand for me. By the middle of junior year, they were playing Friday night, Saturday night, and sometimes Sundays. Between the Jazz and Rock Band, our time together became very little, which was fine, except I didn't want to talk about the band all the time, or be with them. They were not my friends, really, except for Mike.

58. I also *hated* the thought of being a groupie: sitting around listening to music all night with adoring eyes just isn't my style, not at all! So after a while, I wouldn't go, because I would end up dancing with people, and Tom would get jealous and mad. Instead, I'd go with my friends to other parties, or just study, or go to movies and stuff. After a while, I just lost in-

terest. Toward the end of my junior year, I applied to be a resident assistant (RA). I had to interview with the professors who resided in cottages near the dorms and actually were responsible for them.

59. I enjoyed the process and met a lot of people I didn't know at school. My favorite professor quickly became Arthur Isaacson, an English professor with a passion for San Francisco, and who was a very open, caring person. At the end of the first round, the professors asked some students back for second, group, interviews. Most were stuffy and very formal—but not Arthur's. He had a little party, complete with champagne.

60. That was a Friday, a busy day for me! I hadn't had a chance to eat lunch before I got to the interview at 3:00ish. People were in groups talking, and no one was drinking the champagne. So I took half a glass, my maximum. Arthur later told me he thought it was great that I went ahead and had some, even though no one else had wanted to offend anyone. I hadn't really thought about it that way, especially being Italian. I grew up with wine with dinner and never abused it.

61. Anyway, Arthur's party was fun and relaxing! Arthur, Joe (another student), and I got along well, laughing about school gossip and enjoying the warm spring afternoon! Arthur had us play this little game, where you write down a response to some questions, and they're supposed to mean something. I remember some:

62. Favorite color:	Midnight blue—mysterious, dark, soothing	(Means what you think of yourself—Ha, Ha!!)
Why:		
Name a body of water, describe:	puddle—dirty, small, wet, muddy	(Means what you think about sex! My husband will love that one!)
Name an animal:	sea otter—mischievous, silly, fun, curious, adventurous	(Means what others think of you???)
Why?		

Anyway, everyone got a *big* kick out of it, and my puddle answer still comes up when I talk to those guys! Arthur chose Joe and me and Alan to help him with the dorm senior year! What a group!

63. So, my activities and focus were going toward things very different from Tom's. By beginning of senior year, we just sort of fizzled out. I don't

remember being particularly upset about it, given the length of time we had been going out (it had been a long, gradual decline, which I think made it easier). (I was more upset over my high school boyfriend!)

64. Tom and I had never really fought. I have tension and anger. It's funny that, late junior year, I finally expressed some of the anger I felt toward the band taking up his free time. We had driven all over town, picking up odds and ends for a show that night. I didn't want to go, but Tom insisted! Well, the band talks the whole time about this song, that chord, this move, and I'm bored and feeling left out of the conversation. After we let everyone off, I was pretty quiet, so Tom asked what was wrong. I began to tell him, and he said, "You make me mad!" . . . and I cut him off, saying, "Oh yeah, you make *me* mad! Just forget it!" I shocked him; he immediately apologized. It was the weirdest thing! I probably should have ended it then, but I still loved him.

65. Senior year was such a good time. I felt so free and independent, and actively avoided any inkling of a serious relationship. My whole life, I had always had some sort of boyfriend, since 8th grade! Now, I wanted to enjoy doing whatever I wanted to without worrying about someone else's feelings! I wanted to find a job in San Francisco; that much I knew. I was pretty dumb about the process; interviewed with investment banks and consultants, but took the first agreeable job I landed in San Francisco—with Macy's. It sounded interesting, the people were nice, and it meant I could enjoy senior year! Very, very short-term thinking!

66. Arthur took the seniors up to San Francisco one day—we went to a musical, went sight-seeing, and dancing. He was so interesting—talking about the history and excitement of the city. A very different experience than with my parents, which was always family oriented, visiting their relatives, and eating lunch in Golden Gate Park.

67. Then came graduation and being thrown for the first time into the big bad world.

68. I started work right away, having many a student loan to pay back. My roommates (friends from school) were not starting work until August, so I commuted from home the first part of the summer. It was a long commute, about one hour and thirty minutes with traffic. I took the Bart Trains from Fremont to Union Square in San Francisco, where Macy's buying offices are located.

69. The night before my first day in the management training program, I heard on the news that Macy's union had gone on strike! What a mess! The first two weeks were spent in a training class with about twenty-five fresh-faced graduates. We learned the basics of the business and got to know each other. We *hated* crossing the picket lines, being called rude names and stuff. It was not pretty. My class ended up as sales

help on the floor; we learned how to ring up sales, and out we went. Very different than our expectations to work in the buying office, but it was actually fun! I got in the Revlon section, of all places—me, who didn't know *anything* about makeup! And these women would come in, asking about skin and color types and lipsticks! Oh, my!! Did I learn a lot!

70. I did have a man come in to buy makeup for his show. Obviously, he was homosexual and he played in one of the transvestite shows downtown. He was really nice and asked me to help him. What the heck!! I helped him choose, joked with him—who was I to judge. I think he sensed this and bought a ton of stuff, thanking me for my kindness. He even showed me a picture of himself, all done up—gorgeous, prettier than I'll ever be!

71. I've always tried to accept or at least be tolerant of people different than I am. Partly due to my upbringing (my dad is certainly that way). You have to try to look at each person for his or her good points and qualities—hard to do sometimes. But I have a much easier time accepting the faults of an "underdog" type than some egotistical, selfish jerk who expects everything handed to him or her!

72. After about a month on the sales floor, my training class was sent to Colma—to do customer service. What a nightmare! First, being in Colma, which is known for its graveyards! There are more dead people than live ones, honest to God! And the customer service office had virtually stopped operating since the strike. There were long lists of angry customers wanting their furniture delivered or wondering why their credit card balance was wrong. What a mess!! I've never been yelled at so much in my life! After a while, you'd promise anything to get them off your back. None of us knew what we were doing, that was for sure!

73. One good thing from this experience was our class became close; we'd laugh about each day's crisis and try to keep each other up. Eventually, after another one or two months, the strike was over, and we all got our buying office assignments. Now, we could get on with our careers!

74. Right. Out of the frying pan and into the fire. The buying office and function was a *lot* different than I had imagined. I was expecting to use both qualitative and quantitative skills at Macy's—working with people, but also with budgets, projections, and control systems! But Macy's is successful (or at least was at that time) because its buyers knew how to *buy* the right stuff. As a result, inventories piled up, no one knew which store had what merchandise! And the vendors were a breed unto their own (send you more than you ordered, different styles, or charge higher prices), and I had the job of negotiating or threatening them. Every function done in the Buying Office was so ad hoc, it was scary. And very few people had systems skills or wanted to implement controls!

75. After a few months in the Buying Office, I wanted *out*. It was time to start looking for a new job.

76. My roommate, Kim Meyers, was working for a company called Donaldson and Company, a consulting firm. It's a small, young, aggressive firm. Kim was always telling me while I was at Macy's how neat D & Co. was and how I would be so perfect for the job. I knew quite a few people from the company already, because my roommates and I had thrown a party, and Kim and I used to watch them play basketball at the local gym. Plus, I had dated one of the guys there when I had first moved to San Francisco.

77. So I talked to one of the partners, Al Tayler. We met for lunch to talk over business opportunities, and he told me to send over a resume. I interviewed right before Thanksgiving (about two weeks before) and met additional D & Co. people. After meeting the managing partner twice (a man who rarely has anything to say), I was offered a job! I started the Monday after Thanksgiving! I really was excited! The job and company sounded professional; the staff was young, smart, and aggressive; the salary was great! There also was a very obvious career path to making partner.

78. I remember my exit interview from Macy's very clearly. I was nervous to tell Mary, my buyer. She was a very nice person. We grabbed some lunch, and I explained my decision. At first she tried to convince me to stay, at least a year, in order for me to really learn something about the business, but I explained how I just knew it wasn't a fit; there was too much of a focus on the buying and fashion side and not enough on the managing the business side. Macy's was not the greatest to its employees, a point she agreed with. So, she ended up okay about it. I thought it was funny that the Personnel Department wanted me to stay but, when I told them the starting salary at D & Co., they said to go for it!

79. So, I went home for Thanksgiving, taking Kim along, and awaited the next phase of my life.

80. Donaldson & Company was one of the most interesting experiences of my life. I learned a lot about people and organizations from the firm, and also lost some naivete about work. I went in thinking: this was the life! As compared to Macy's, where I took the underground moon to Union Square and had to walk past the bums begging each day, D & Co. was located in the heart of the financial district, in a new, gorgeous building. I could take a bus in to work!!

81. This was a big deal. At Macy's, going on the underground moon was a *drag*. It seemed to always get jammed up while we were in the tunnel! It was so dark and gloomy, and the ride took half an hour to one hour ten minutes, depending on who had stalled! I hated that tremendously!! In contrast, the bus was crowded, but we always got a seat or could take one of the express buses that took fifteen to twenty minutes. And we could watch the outside activities,

which I always found interesting—so many different types of people and buildings.

82. Indeed, the initial contrasts between the two experiences were great, and indeed different. At Donaldson, I had to wear suits, or look "professional." There was freedom on how you spent your day for the most part. You got paid for overtime, which you worked a *lot* of. And it was a small, growing company with only four levels: staff, senior, executive consultant, and partner.

83. During that time, my roommates and I moved closer to town—the Richmond District. Dave, Kim, and I picked up a fourth, Jerry (he worked with Dave), nice guy. And Kim developed a big crush, and they started going together. In fact, they are getting married next year. What a household we had! A nice flat, probably built for three, but what did we care! It had a fireplace, big kitchen, beautiful bay windows, and was located on the second floor. Initially, Kim and I shared the master bedroom, but eventually it practically became just mine.

84. What a group! I consider Kim one of my closest friends, but she is very strong willed and likes things done *her* way. She and Dave didn't get along very well. He was a slob around the house and kind of a nerd. But those two would get in an argument, and I'd have to listen to Kim go on and on about it . . . wah, wah, wah . . . she was an All-American gymnast, and I think she had devoted so much time to her sport that she was a little immature socially. She drove a lot of people crazy, 'cause she'd start talking about things not related to each other or get silent all of a sudden.

85. But she definitely had her good qualities: she was such a loyal friend and really guarded her friendships. She'd do anything for her close friends and was always there when I needed someone to talk to.

86. I think it was tough on Kim when I first started at D & Co. I'm very outgoing and made friends very easily. I was sort of a favorite of the firm in a lot of ways, but Kim had alienated a few with her outspokenness. But, as time went on, everything blended together just fine.

87. My first case was examining a claim for damage that occurred from cost overruns on a fixed-price contract. It was a huge power plant. I got to travel to Naja Valley for about two months. It was a lot of fun, and I enjoyed learning about construction. I was seen as the "cute little gal" on the case by the client, a title which I later began to resent, but during those days, I really loved the job, the closeness of the people, and the money. (I could start paying off all those bills!)

88. I moved on to another case. It was a pumped storage plant which provided electricity during off-peak hours. A remarkable plant, which used two lakes at different elevations to turn the huge turbines which generated electricity. Our team got to take a look at the plant, which was built inside a mountain—one in-

credible feat. Anyway, one of the dams had broken, causing incredible damage. We calculated the extent of those damages for the client.

89. I learned a lot about cost models during that project. It was a small team of four people, and I really got a good reputation as a hard worker and good team player. One of the seniors on the case was an arrogant MBA from Northwestern named John—very much a jerk, but he liked me a lot and thought I was smart. I swear, people used to ask me how I could stand working for him. Really, it was easy. After I proved I could handle the work, I took a large section of the more detailed work for myself, and told him I'd come by twice a week to give him status reports. He was more than happy to oblige: he hated detail work and instead loved to theorize about the most accurate way to calculate damages or whatever. I was the practical one who got the work done, which made me look good. All in all, the relationship worked out well. And I built myself a reputation as a real go-getter on the case. You see, I figured if I worked harder than everyone, got along, was a team player, stayed long hours, I would be rewarded for it, regardless of company politics. Unfortunately, it was true only to a point. A lot was taken for granted due to my good nature.

90. I learned to change that aspect of me as time went on. After having done well over the past year on the cases I mentioned, I moved to another case. We had to commute to San Ramon five days a week (an hour and a half drive) and worked, on average, until 10:00 p.m. It was a horrendous case. But I did what had always worked—was the one to work latest, get things coordinated, and do the dirty work as well. But the senior on the case was really laid back and did not control the case very well. After five or six months of this crazy pace, I got sick of being the one to come through but still not getting any of the credit. Enough was enough! My dad had warned me against this—always trying to please, always willing to do whatever needed to be done. “Miss I can do it!” People take advantage of it big time.

91. Anyway, there was also a woman—Laura—on the case who had been with Donaldson & Company about six months, less time than I had. She had her MBA from Berkeley, and was very aggressive, but also really dingy! She got away with murder on the case. But rumor had it she was slated for the fast track, because she was a woman, had an MBA, and three years prior work experience. Maybe so, but she did nothing!

92. Promotions were coming up in June. By then, I had been with the firm a year and a half. Most everyone takes two years to make senior, but everyone told me I had a great chance at making it in one and a half years, given the workload of the last case.

93. Well, I didn't make it that time. It was disappointing, but I understood, given most of my peers had to wait at least two years. But what burned my cookies was that *Laura* had made it in a year! None of

the staff could believe it, especially those that had seen me in the office working all night on the case, not her. I was pissed.

94. But it was one of the best lessons I ever learned, and I am wiser for it. I talked with Al about it (the partner). He explained how she was older, and the company partners in San Francisco were getting pressure from Chicago to promote and *keep* women. Most made it to senior and quit soon afterwards. He admitted to me that I had held the case together, etc., etc., but I was young and had a great future with D & Co., and he said my bonus and raise (which was large) was very high to make up for the promotion. It was frustrating, because it wasn't like he told me I needed to improve anything, but just time.

95. After that, I was not so blindly dedicated. I still worked hard, but I did not do the more detailed work no one else wanted in addition. I took over office recruiting instead, and continued doing my best on the case I was working on—but forget helping out above and beyond the call of duty. I earned a lot of respect from a lot of people for standing up for myself and adjusting my behavior. It was hard to suppress saying “yes” to everything.

96. I ended up my last year at Donaldson on the big case. It had sixty to ninety people on it. By then I was supervising newer staff and enjoying the work for the most part. I think Al had given me a good part of the case and an excellent team. I was promoted in December, after two years with the firm.

97. Back in June, when I was passed over for early promotion, I began thinking about business school. I had always intended to go back and it seemed that I needed to learn more about managing and business strategies. Plus, I had begun seriously dating a man in the firm. (This I will go into detail about later). So, I started requesting applications and set about to find a good school to attend. I spent my entire two-week vacation in December filling out applications and perfecting them. It was a very exciting time for me.

98. Mark and I met at Donaldson after about seven months. He started with the company the July after me. He was from the D.C. office of Donaldson, out on the case I was also working on. I remember when he came to San Francisco. About ten came together from various offices. I said to Kim, “Don't you think he's good looking?” She definitely thought so.

99. A bunch of us went out to Chinese food, and I spent part of the time flirting with Mark, poking him in the stomach about how much he ate. We immediately got along well.

100. We found out we both played tennis and started playing together after work. He was good! And very funny! I was immediately attracted to him. The first time we played tennis, we went out for pizza afterwards and talked about ourselves; we had so much fun!

101. There was a problem, however. At D & Co., we weren't allowed to date people within the firm. The only problem was, I enjoyed him so much; the more time we spent together, going for ice cream, out dancing, etc., the more I knew he was someone truly special. I started thinking about him all the time! And he about me. So we started sneaking around, sort of to speak. At first it was kinda fun—kind of adventurous—but as time went on, it was just a pain! At work, of course, we were always professional (except the time I kissed him in the elevator), but it was irritating that D & Co. could also control our personal lives. They demanded so much!

102. And there was always the worry that Mark would be sent back to D.C. In fact, the first week of November, after we had been dating for about three months, Mark was sent back to work on a small case. Supposedly, he'd be back by Christmas. I remember being so sad. On Halloween, we carved a pumpkin together and talked about the situation. We hadn't known each other long enough to do anything about the situation; it was a "Wait & See" thing. The night before Mark left, we went to dinner in Sausalito and walked by the bay afterwards. Both sad, both wondering.

103. He came back in December, and what a wonderful Christmas we had! We began our tradition of "stocking stuffers"—lots of silly little presents in one of Mark's big athletic socks!! We really enjoyed that Christmas, going to Union Square, shopping, and enjoying all the magic of San Francisco in winter.

104. I was in love, and it never wavered. When it came time to talk about business schools, Mark was such a tremendous help. I applied to Stanford, Harvard, UCLA, Berkeley, and Darden. Mark had his MBA from William and Mary and knew a lot about the different schools. He was excited about this new adventure and incredibly supportive.

105. That December when I was doing applications was a special one. When Mark got back from his family's (in Boston) on December 29, he asked me to marry him. I was so excited! I knew Mark would make me happy forever. Our values and tastes were similar, and we enjoyed each other as *best friends* as well as lovers. In fact, that's the inscription on my wedding band! "Best Friends." I also knew we'd grow together, and I thought he was particularly sexy, especially when we're alone.

106. The engagement was complicated by work! So only our family knew until I quit on May 1. During these months, the whole situation seemed so stupid, so ridiculous. But I'll always remember D & Co. fondly, because without it, I would have never met Mark. We set the wedding date for May 28, 1988.

107. I thought about something else relating to Donaldson & Co. About a week before my last day, I was working on finishing up testimony my team had been preparing for a case. We'd been working hard,

as usual. I really wanted to leave with all the loose ends tied up and worked about twelve hours a day to do so. My friends said I was crazy—I should be taking it easy, not working my buns off! But I hate being lazy on the job, and strive to always do my best. Well, this one particular day, I was at the client's meeting with an engineer to clear up some details. Apparently, Al had been trying to reach me. I went back into the office, and he roars at me, "Where have you been? Why didn't you leave me a number? I'm leaving to go to D.C. in an hour and need copies of the testimony!!"

108. I'm thinking: what am I, your secretary? I tell him that I'll make his copies for him, but I'm very annoyed at his attitude. I don't need this shit Well, I go back in my office mad! And I share this office with Mark and Jeff. So I'm letting off steam, and I tell them the story.

109. I don't get mad too often, but when I do, I'm quite hotheaded. "He needs it so fast, it's a high priority, is it?" So I make the copies, walk into a meeting he's having, and throw them on his desk with some sarcastic comment under my breath. The meeting was with the "boy's club," as we used to call it. The five guys who ran the big cases in the office—all very self-important.

110. So I was rude!! I felt better. Anyway, Mark, Jeff, and I are in my office when Al comes in. Mark kinda looked at me, then stood up. Al goes past Mark to me and apologizes for yelling at me and says he should have had his secretary do it, but I'm so reliable, etc., etc.

111. So everything's cool. I look over at Mark, and he's got this smile on his face. "I think I came close to blowing it," he said to me. "I thought Al was gonna yell at you for interrupting his meeting, and I was gonna stand over him and say, look, you little fuck, leave her alone, you shit!" (Al's this short, bald, little man, and Mark wanted to tower over him and point into his chest!) "Couldn't you see me grabbing Al by the britches and throwing him out of our office?" Mark muses. Mark and I both laughed about that for hours!

112. All in all, D & Co. was a great experience, which left a strong mark in my life. Especially, it's hard to break away from feeling a part of D & Co., even now.

113. Hearing from business schools was exciting; first was Darden. Mark was out of town on a case, so I called him that night. In fact, I opened it up over the phone! One in! I ended up getting into Darden, Harvard, UCLA, and Berkeley. Not Stanford.

114. It was hard trying to decide where to go! Harvard was so expensive—I just didn't know if it would be worth the extra investment. I had a friend there I visited, but it didn't particularly impress me. Darden did, however. The classes were engaging, the community small, the people very friendly. I had a great warm and fuzzy feeling. Plus, it was a new part

of the country to explore. For some time, I had been meaning to try a new place. If I had gone to UCLA or Berkeley, chances are I would have never left California.

115. The clincher came when Darden offered me a full scholarship, for both years. That helped so much. If we decided to have children in five years, I wouldn't feel obligated to go back to work right away to pay off my huge debt. Darden it was. Not too many people could believe that I had turned down Harvard, but I did not find it that difficult. I think even Mark was surprised. Although very supportive, Mark wanted me to make my own decision and did not pressure me one way or the other.

116. To celebrate, Mark went out and bought a new car—Toyota MR2 (with my Harvard \$!). It's a great little car! I'm so glad Mark bought it! He works so hard, and he doesn't splurge too often! It's perfect for him, and I think he enjoys driving it when he comes down to Charlottesville to see me.

117. I quit Donaldson in May and took a temporary job during the summer, worked nine to five, and had a ton of free time. It was very relaxing, and Mark and I were slowly able to do things as a couple without worrying about what people said or who saw us.

118. We drove across country together, and took my car and Mark's. Mark's mom came along to help with the driving. It was a blast! I love to drive to begin with, and I felt as though I was starting a whole new life, a whole new adventure.

119. Darden has been quite an experience. I got there so excited! Back to working hard, learning a lot, becoming a star. Reaching for the top! (Ha! Ha!) I knew I'd be missing Mark terribly. He was still in San Francisco. But we both saw this as such an important experience. First year was rough—worrying so much about understanding the concepts, saying worthwhile things in class, earning the respect of your peers. It's not an easy way to learn, through the case method. It's very confusing at times, in fact. But you don't forget what you've learned, either. I suppose it's sort of like boot camp.

120. Section D was tremendous! What a remarkable group of people, in my eyes. I really enjoyed hearing the class discussions every day. My enjoyment was hampered somewhat by the worry of participation: did I talk enough, say noteworthy things, etc.? The professors are an interesting group also; who knows what they're thinking!

121. For the first time in my life, I had to deal with feeling average. Everyone worked as hard as I did, especially first semester, and I had an economics background, not accounting or finance. But about half way through the year, I hit upon something: I should care about what *I* think of what I said and how my classmates respond, *not* the professors. And I've tried to

abide by that ever since. I think it's important to judge yourself by your own standards.

122. Throughout the first year, Mark was so wonderful; he kept on telling me I was special, that I was doing fine, that he loved me unconditionally. We were also planning our wedding, which is how I spent all my vacations. Mom and Dad were terrific! Since the wedding was at Stanford Church and the reception in San Jose, they did almost all of the real work, and it was a superb wedding!

123. Dad made my dress; it was absolutely gorgeous, very traditional, a lot of beading, silk, and off-the-shoulders neckline. My dad is so talented, as I mentioned before! He also made all six bridesmaids' dresses, which also turned out gorgeous.

124. The wedding turned out great. Mark and I got around to see everyone, and everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. Mom was a nervous wreck the entire day. It was like she was throwing a big party, and she's the hostess. We had a traditional Italian Catholic wedding—very formal, but with people dancing, singing, and really being alive. People got a big kick out of my red silk petticoat under my wedding gown.

125. Yes, a red petticoat. It's kind of a long story. You see, when I was young, I told my parents I wanted to get married in a red dress—I love the color red, and wouldn't it be scandalous! Of course, Mom and Dad shook their heads. Well, when I first tried on my beautiful gown, Dad had me put a red petticoat underneath it—an undergarment from a prom dress he had made my sister Mary. Well, it gave the dress a beautiful sheen, and it came alive. Plus, my all-time-favorite movie "Gone With The Wind"—I love the scene when Rhett brings Mammie back a red silk petticoat from Paris. So it seemed appropriate. Finally, it let some of my personality come through—a little mischievous, but always in fun.

126. Mark and I had a wonderful honeymoon in Maui, Hawaii; we lay in the sun, went sightseeing, and relaxed from the hectic pace of the wedding.

127. Immediately upon returning to Washington, D.C., we went to work. Mark is still with Donaldson & Co. and still travels an awful lot. But miraculously, he was in town the entire summer and did not work much overtime or weekends. I was doing a summer internship at Sallie Mae in Georgetown. We got to commute in and out together! It was lovely spending our days together and being a full-fledged married couple.

128. During the summer, we took up golf, played a lot of tennis, and made a concerted effort to read a lot, eat health foods, and exercise regularly. We were pretty good, all and all. It was really special being together, even with the traffic jams and humid weather!

129. Sallie Mae was a wonderful experience. I had gone into Sallie Mae against a lot of friends' opinions: the pay was lousy, and the intern from last year's

class hated it. But I had a good feeling about Brian, the man I was to work for, and that it was in D.C. Besides I felt I was doing something inherently worthwhile—helping the student loan process run smoothly and more effectively. I see it as a worthy business and cause. The people I worked with, on a whole, were tremendous, very bright, disciplined, hard-working, helpful, and open to your opinions. They gave me enough freedom to work through my summer projects as I saw fit, yet held me accountable and questioned me as if I was a full-time employee—I loved it!

130. I was particularly impressed with the senior vice-president of the Servicing and Systems Division. She's very demanding and sort of abrupt, but very fair and positive if she thinks you've done a good job. She's good at delegating work and motivating her staff.

131. She liked my work a lot; I think I'll be offered a full-time position there and would definitely be interested. However, I would want to stay away from the accounting/budgeting function per se and move into the more operational issues that affect Sallie Mae.

132. I should write each of my co-workers at Sallie Mae to thank them and tell them how much I enjoyed my experience.

133. The end of the summer—which takes me

to now: second year at Darden. I'm enjoying it so much better. My first-year grades, by the way, came on my wedding day, and I did very well, better than first semester, and than I had expected! This, coupled with the positive feedback from Sallie Mae, really helped me to regain a lot of confidence in myself. I actually look forward to speaking in class and have chosen classes I am interested in—which helps keep my motivation very high. It's also nice being supportive to the first-year students. I really want to help make a difference for them—tell them to keep their self-confidence, always question what's going on, to enjoy it as best they can. As a first-year section advisor, I am looking forward to helping my old section become integrated into Darden.

134. Classes are good, with most of the professors being quite interesting.

135. I miss Mark a lot. It's harder being apart this year, but he comes down every weekend, and we play golf together. We try to do things outside of Darden when we're together. It definitely helps me keep a perspective, especially since I don't mind working extra hard on the weekdays, knowing I'll take some time off during weekends.

136. And that just about sums up my life.