

## Introduction

My name is Larry Cashman and I hate cold weather. It chills me to the bone. First my skin gets cold, then my extremities get numb, then I get the shivers and shakes, then my heart beats faster, then I become physically and mentally dysfunctional. New York City is not a great place to be if you hate cold weather, and it just so happens that is where I grew up. In September, the dog days of summer morph into the cool days of autumn. In October, the cold weather starts, mild at first as the leaves change color, but then cold rain and frigid temperatures inevitably follow. By November winter has set in and the sun won't shine again until April. Nothing but snow, sleet, ice, and gloom for the next five months.

Every year, as this cycle approached, I would go into a state of depressions. Now they have a name for it – Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD - which is exactly how I felt every September as winter approached. I got irritable, sluggish, had difficulty concentrating, and lost interest in everything except watching football and basketball on TV. When the snow came, my SADness became acute. I saw no redeeming value in snow and hated the sight of it. What I hated even more was shoveling it, walking in it, and driving in it. Then, when the snow turned to ice, it added insult to injury. Cars skidded all over the road. Pedestrians slipped on the pavement. I lost count of how many times I was walking along innocently, slipped on a patch of ice, and smashed my head on the pavement. Most people just put up with it. I just got more depressed.

As an avid football fan, I watched every game of the season on TV. Every year the final game of the season, the Pro Bowl, was played in mid-February in Honolulu, Hawaii. Here I was, sitting in bleak, cold New York City, freezing my ass off. And there on the TV screen was sunny, warm, and beautiful Honolulu. The fans were in shirtsleeves, there were palm trees in the background, and the cameras would pan to the scenic white sand beaches where surfers frolicked on surfboards and the wahines preened in their bikinis.

To my SAD-adled, dysfunctional mind this could only be some fantasy land, existing only in some depression-induced hallucination. But it turned out that Hawaii was real and a mere 5000 miles due west of my home in New York City. From my isolated perch in New York City in the 1960s, it may just as well have been on another planet. And every year, when the Pro Bowl came around, I dreamed about escaping my cold, bleak, aimless existence in New York City, and moving to Hawaii, where winter and its attendant unpleasantness would be a thing of the past.

There was one big problem with this dream. I had absolutely no prospects of ever leaving the insular confines of New York City, much less getting to Hawaii. The most I could hope for was somehow getting to Long Island or New Jersey to work as a used car salesman. I was bereft of ambition, had no aspirations, had few if any skills, and was not particularly bright. I was a slacker in school who was satisfied with

mediocrity. I was also lazy, untrustworthy, and prone to mischief, which caused me considerable grief while attending elementary and high school. Some called me a ne'er-do-well, which was actually pretty charitable. My Italian American family all lived in New York City. Having never been east of Pennsylvania or south of New Jersey, my chances of getting to Hawaii were about the same as my chances of getting to the moon. In fact, I think I had a better shot at the moon. The only way I could possibly get to Hawaii was if Captain Kirk from Star Trek would beam me there. It wasn't clear why Captain Kirk would want to find a loser like me and beam him to Hawaii, but that was my only hope.

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Fast forward 50 years and I am sitting on the veranda of my home in Kailua Hawaii, with a gorgeous view of the Pacific Ocean and an 18 year old single malt scotch whiskey in hand, as I write this memoir. It is January 2017, the weather is stunning, the sun is shining, there is a cool breeze drifting in from the ocean, and the temperature is a pleasant 77 degrees. In the intervening years, not only did I make it to Hawaii, I also lived and worked in New Mexico, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Laos. I have observed the customs and culture of the Navajo Indians on their reservation in New Mexico; and had spells cast on me by Navajo witch doctors. I was there when tens of thousands of Cambodian refugees streamed across the border to Thailand fleeing the Pol Pot genocide in Cambodia; and ran for my life from a tsunami while vacationing at a pristine Thai beach. I traveled all over Indonesia's 17,000 islands and met one of the world's most ruthless and corrupt dictators. I watched Mt. Pinatubo erupt in the Philippines and lived through two attempted coup d'état. I arrived in Laos five years after the country was opened up to the modern world, and traveled to tribal areas so remote that the people had never seen a honky like me before.

That noted philosopher, Bob Marley, echoed Abraham Lincoln when he sang "You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time." With all due respect to Marley and Lincoln, my life and career have been living proof that you can fool all of the people most of the time. If you want to find out how a shiftless, aimless, ne'er-do-well with no goals, no prospects, no ambition, and no discernible talents fooled a lot of people for a long time, read on.

Larry Cashman