

Introduction to Volume 2

When I was growing up in New York City, I had one dream – to get as far away from New York City as fast as I could. I hated the place. It was crowded, congested, polluted, perilous and seething with ethnic tensions. A coward and malingerer like me could only get hurt in a place like New York. But most of all, I hated the weather. I could deal with the hot, muggy, rainy, dreary summers. What I couldn't tolerate was the cold weather in the winter — nothing but snow, sleet, ice, and gloom for five months. During the marijuana-induced delusional states I frequently experienced in high school and college, I fantasized about escaping New York City for some tropical paradise in the South Pacific where cold weather was a thing of the past..

“Delusional” is the operational word for those daydreams, because I, Larry Cashman, had a snowball's chance in hell of escaping the insular confines of New York City. In the colloquial vernacular, I was what is called a “loser.” I had no ambition, no aspirations, few skills, and was not particularly bright. I was lazy, venal, and selfish. I was also prone to mischief. I have been called a rogue, a scoundrel, a reprobate, a bounder, a coward, and a candy ass. The only path I could imagine to escape from New York City to a tropical paradise was to have Captain Kirk from Star Trek beam me there. This plan had two huge flaws. Captain Kirk didn't exist. He was a television character. Even if he was real, there was no conceivable reason why he would pick a loser like me from the eight million people in New York City to beam to a tropical paradise. During my more lucid moments, it was clear that the best I could hope for was to become a used car salesman on Long Island.

You do learn some things growing up on the means streets of New York City. I was a scammer and schemer who used guile and deceit to achieve both righteous and nefarious outcomes. I could think on my feet and talk my way out of trouble when confronted by parents, teachers, or the police. And I was a consummate bullshit artist. With just a modicum of information, I could sound knowledgeable on any topic. I could spin a yarn extemporaneously and sound convincing. For me, bullshitting was a survival skill.

Most of all, I have uncanny good luck. It has saved me from some serious dilemmas. And created opportunities that I don't deserve. As I have recounted in Volume 1 of the Cashman Chronicles, *The Formative Years*, these meager attributes — deception, guile, good luck, and the mellifluous banter of the bullshit artist — enabled me to escape from New York City and make my way to New Mexico, Hawaii and Thailand. I talked my way into Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery where, through a stroke of monumental good luck, I met my lovely wife Sabrina, whose desire to travel the world swept me from my lethargy and propelled us to New Mexico and Hawaii. In Hawaii, I fortuitously met a professor who had enough chutzpah to send a slacker like me to Thailand for the fieldwork for my Masters Degree. In Thailand, my mellifluous bullshit — and my facility with languages, a skill unbeknownst to me before — convinced the US Embassy in Jakarta and the Indonesian government to offer me a comfortable job in Indonesia. A good line of bullshit and timely good luck can take you a long way.

Volume 2 of the Cashman Chronicles, *Cashman in the Tropics*, describes Larry Cashman's escapades in Southeast Asia as I lived and worked in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Laos. It also recounts the unusual circumstances which landed me a choice position as a lecturer at a distinguished

University. On this journey, Cashman stumbles and bungles his way to positions of esteem and distinction that he doesn't deserve. It goes without saying that, through all of this, Larry Cashman remains the same shiftless, lazy, cowardly, but lovable scoundrel and ne-er do well that you met in Volume 1.