



**Larry Cashman, the
Pusillanimous Rascal**

Epilogue

Retirement in Hawaii

In 2015, after 37 years living and working in Southeast Asia, I decided to hang up my spurs and retire to Hawaii. The debilitating ailments I experienced that final year in Laos made it an easy decision.

It started with the severe lower back pain I suffered after doing some physical labor. You might ask yourself why someone like me, who hadn't done a scintilla of strenuous exercise for 37 years, would attempt to perform physical labor of any kind. That's why we have house staff. Realizing that retirement meant returning to the US, where such amenities don't exist, I decided to get myself into shape. One day, I picked up a broom and started sweeping the yard. This strange implement felt awkward in my hands. I couldn't develop a rhythmic stroke. After 10 minutes, my hands were covered with reddish-purple blisters, and I was exhausted, wheezing, and gasping for air. The following day I woke up with excruciating lower back pain from the apparent overexertion. Only by lying in my recliner with a cool drink while watching a basketball game on TV could I get a modicum of relief from the intolerable pain. I guess I tried to do too much.

Most alarmingly, I developed a severe case of dishpan hands when Sabrina insisted that I wash some dishes "to prepare for re-entry to the US." After three episodes of washing dishes in warm, soapy water, my hands became so chafed, red, and sore that I could hardly flip the channels on the TV remote control. For me that qualifies as complete disability. This entire episode was so mentally traumatic that even the thought of washing dishes – or engaging in any housework for that matter – caused a recurrence of dishpan hands. I couldn't even walk into the kitchen without my hands getting chafed and itchy.

While recovering from my newly acquired maladies and preparing to retire, I received a phone call from an unlikely source. Gavin Metcalf was a health economist from UCLA whom I had hired years before in Indonesia. Although a faculty member at UCLA, Gavin looked like a surfer boy from Malibu Beach. During my time in Indonesia, Gavin and I hung out together, got high together, and became good friends. In the intervening 20 years I had neither seen nor heard from Gavin. I was surprised, to say the least, when he called me in Laos in 2015.

"Cashman, I've been trying to find you for the past six months. How did you end up in Laos?" Gavin asked.

"That's a long story. More to the point, where have you been and why are you calling me in Laos?"

"I'm at the Lao Plaza Hotel in Vientiane. I came here to see you. I have an interesting proposition that I think you'll like".

This was puzzling. Gavin Metcalf, whom I had not seen in years, arrives in Laos unannounced with a "proposition" for me? This made me suspicious. It should be noted that Gavin was a guy who operated on the margins of respectability. But so did guys like Seamus Campbell, Andrew Jackson Poole, Pete Youngman, and Toby Suykerbuck. And even myself!!!! On the other hand, Gavin was a brilliant economist and a good guy. At the very least he deserved an opportunity to explain his proposition.

I met Gavin at the Lao Plaza Hotel. He looked like the same surfer boy I had last seen 20 years ago, a bit more conventionally dressed now and his hair a bit shorter. Our conversation began, as it always had, with an in-depth analysis of the world of basketball. Finally, I asked, "So what is this proposition you have for me."



Southwestern California University

"Southwestern California University (SCU) in LA recruited me to develop an International Masters Degree Program in Public Policy. The students will come from Asian countries, and they need to learn about public policy at the international level. If I'm not mistaken, that's what you've been doing in Asian countries for the past 35 years. I want you to be one of the faculty members in my new Masters Degree Program."

I knew that Gavin smoked good weed, but I thought that he had moved on to harder drugs, because his proposal was the craziest thing I ever heard. Larry Cashman knew absolutely nothing about teaching. I had never taught anyone anything. In fact, most people who know me don't listen to anything I say. And this guy wants me to teach graduate students at one of the most prestigious universities on the West Coast!!!!

"I don't know what planet you're living on" I responded. "But on planet Earth where I live, anyone who wants me to teach at a university would be certified as a lunatic. Gavin, are you a lunatic?"

"Well Cashman, I've been called many things in my day, and 'lunatic' is one of them. But right now, I'm serious. This program will have students from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, China, and Malaysia. You've been working in some of these countries for the last four decades. You must have learned something by now? Plus, and this is a big 'plus,' you can bullshit better than anyone I know."

Gavin was insistent, I'll give him that. "I've learned a thing or two in the last 37 years," I acknowledged. "But I haven't the slightest idea how to teach graduate students."

"No worries, Cashman. Just toss about your unadulterated bullshit. Tell them some stories. Like the time you survived that helicopter crash in the Philippines. Or the time you were captured by Cambodian rebels in Thailand. Or how you received that unsolicited bribe in Indonesia. Or the time that you almost got nabbed buying weed in Jakarta. You must admit these are some great stories from an otherwise ignominious career. The students will love it."

I couldn't argue with Gavin's reasoning. I did have a lot of stories, as the reader can attest. And I can bullshit with the best of them. But teaching graduate students?

When Gavin noticed my hesitation, he pounced. "I can offer you a sweet deal. We can squeeze your classroom sessions into a 4-week period so you can luxuriate in Hawaii the rest of the time. You will stay at a luxury hotel while in L.A., and I can pay you handsomely (Gavin knew how venal I was). I will also put at your disposal a junior faculty member and a teaching assistant to handle unpleasantries such as grading exams and assignments. And..."

Gavin paused for effect. Then he delivered the piece de resistance. "And I will guarantee that we attend a Los Angeles Lakers basketball game with seats within five rows from the court whenever you come to L.A. LeBron James, Dwayne Wade, and the Miami Heat will be playing the Lakers when you come in January for the first session. Would you like to be sitting five rows from LeBron when he drives to the hoop?"

This was hitting below the belt. Gavin knew how much I loved to watch basketball. To attend a live NBA game sitting within five rows of the court was like a dream come true. That sealed the deal.

"Well, Gavin old boy, under these circumstances, I accept your offer. When do we start?"

Southwestern California University was one of the oldest and most prestigious universities on the West Coast. Its verdant campus, with stately red-brick Renaissance Revival style buildings, was an oasis of greenery in the middle of L.A.'s urban decay. The campus was like a fantasy world populated with affluent students whizzing by on roller blades, skateboards, and motorized scooters. As I would soon learn, the faculty were predominantly old, conservative, white, patrician men who occupied tenured sinecures that bestowed status and financial remuneration without requiring any meaningful work. That, as the reader already knows, sounded like a good gig to me.

My students that first year came from eleven different countries including the US, and they were highly conversant in politics, economics, and foreign affairs. My job description was to teach them about policy analysis, program design, and evaluation. I regaled them with examples of the policies and programs I had designed and evaluated during my many years working overseas. I omitted certain details, like my marijuana deal in Ancol.¹

The first year went well. Nevertheless, I noticed that the students were reluctant to participate in classroom discussions. There was an apparent barrier between the students and their instructor that I had not managed to breach. I spoke with Gavin Metcalf about this matter to see if he had any insights or suggestions.

"You have identified one of the biggest obstacles that professors encounter when teaching Asian students," Gavin opined. "Professors are god-like figures in their home countries, creating a psychological barrier between professors and students. You must find ways to transcend that barrier, to make the

¹ See Chapter 5, Volume 2 of the Cashman Chronicles when Cashman nearly got busted for doing a marijuana deal in Indonesia.

students feel comfortable with you, and to trust you. Only when you have established that trust can real learning begin.”

These comments were quite profound, especially coming from a surfer boy like Gavin. But he had been teaching for many years and knew how to reach students. It left me in a quandary. What could I do to make the students feel comfortable with me, to establish an environment of trust?

By the time I returned to L.A. for my second year of teaching, I had a plan. In my first class with a new group of students, I spent the first half of the class doing introductions and telling them about my work in Southeast Asia. After the break I transformed myself into the renowned "Cashman the Magnificent" and performed a magic show for them. My tricks included all the old reliables – the sponge ball routine, the ghost in the scarf, the interlinking rings, coins across, rope tricks, and card tricks. The students loved Cashman the Magnificent's corny act. Suddenly I was no longer a god-like professor. I was just another guy doing cheesy magic tricks that made them laugh.

The magic show had the desired effect. The students loved the magic tricks, and in subsequent class sessions, we engaged in lively discussions. The students were no longer afraid to question or challenge me. The barrier between the students and instructor had vanished into thin air.

Three days later I received a telephone call from Gavin Metcalf. "Cashman, the Dean has received irate calls from multiple faculty members complaining that a professor in my program is performing magic tricks in class. They were incensed that someone had demeaned an SCU graduate class with magic tricks. When the Dean mentioned magic tricks, I immediately thought of you. Have you been doing magic tricks in class? What am I going to tell the Dean, Cashman?"

That was an easy one for me. "Why don't you tell the Dean to kiss my ass."

"That's easy for you to say, Cashman. You'll be leaving town in two weeks' time," Gavin replied despondently. "I, on the other hand, have to live and work with these people all the time." Gavin was clearly disturbed by the Dean's reaction.

"I'm sorry, Gavin," I responded obligingly. "That response was a bit callous. Why don't you tell the Dean to stick it where the sun don't shine."

"This is serious Cashman. The Dean wants to meet us tomorrow to explain this incident."

"That's probably not a good idea," I countered. "If the Dean hassles me, I might kick him in the balls. Or I might just leave town and head back to Hawaii."

I was rapidly losing patience with these uptight academics and their educational elitism. It might not be "proper" to perform magic tricks during a graduate class, but my performance had the desired effect. The students loved it, and now my classes were going amazingly well, with lots of discussion both among the students and with me.

Gavin was adamant. "The only place you're going is to meet the Dean with me tomorrow. You will not tell him to kiss your ass and you will not kick him in the balls. We have to put this fiasco behind us." Gavin left me no choice. I had to face the music with the Dean.

As Gavin and I waited in the foyer of the Dean's office the next day, I started feeling some apprehension, even second guessing my decision to perform magic tricks in class. I was about to get lambasted by this pompous academic, when I was only trying to create a better learning environment for my students. My only choice was to grin and bear it.

When we were ushered into his office, Dean Jacob Meltzer was waiting for us with his hand extended and a big grin on his face. "So, this is the magician who has shaken up those old farts on the faculty with his magic tricks. Do you have a stage name?"

"I'm Cashman the Magnificent, Master of Prestidigitation and Legerdemain. But you can just call me Cashman. Everyone does." This reaction was the last thing I expected, a warm welcome from a grinning Dean.

"Well Cashman, your magic performance caused quite a ruckus among the Neanderthals on the faculty of our esteemed institution. After your magic show, your students told other students at the school, who asked their professors why they didn't do anything creative like that in class. Those old troglodytes haven't done or said anything creative or exciting in years....perhaps even decades. Most of them still use overhead projectors and the same transparencies they prepared 20 years ago. Afraid that they might have to do something innovative, they complained that doing magic in class was undignified and demeaned our venerable institution. Meanwhile the students absolutely loved it, and many want to sign up for your classes next semester."

I was flabbergasted. Talk about a change of fortune. Instead of reading me the riot act, the Dean was effusive in his praise. "That took chutzpah to do magic tricks in class to break the ice with your students," he continued. "I want to use this occasion to light a fire under the asses of our prehistoric faculty. Will you help me?"

While I was contemplating the Dean's proposition and the emoluments I would extract from him in return, Gavin interjected obsequiously, "We'll be glad to help. Just tell us what you want done."

I was pissed at Gavin for volunteering my services so eagerly. I was thinking of extracting some pecuniary compensation at a minimum. But Gavin just wanted to get us out of this mess as quickly and as amicably as possible. Besides, the Dean would owe us one later.

The Dean had a plan. "I would like Cashman to convene a special workshop on creative techniques in education for all tenured faculty members. I will make attendance mandatory and require attendees to incorporate at least one creative technique from the workshop into their classes."

When I heard this, I wanted to jump out the window. Conduct a workshop on creative educational techniques!! Deal with tenured faculty!! This was one proposition that I wanted no part of!

For the first time I interrupted the Dean's soliloquy. "With all due respect, Dean Meltzer, your tenured faculty members are the biggest bunch of boors, oafs, and louts that I've ever come across. And I have met a horde of such buffoons in my time. These people live in a time warp where they stand on a pedestal for students to worship them. But more to the point, I don't know anything about creative educational techniques. I just know my cheesy magic tricks."

"Have no fears Cashman," the Dean replied. "Just teach them some simple magic tricks. I would love to see my antediluvian faculty attempting to palm a coin or make a card disappear. At the very least, this exercise will teach them some humility."

And so it went. The first workshop was scheduled for the following week. It was a nightmare for me. The tenured faculty members at SCU were a bunch of pampered dilettantes who hadn't practiced public policy in decades. Allowing them to teach public policy was the equivalent of inviting a surgeon who hadn't performed any surgery in years to teach surgery to medical students. The youngest faculty

members were already in their sixties while several were well into their eighties. A more worthless bunch of ragamuffins I had never met.

While teaching one of them how to perform the *Needle through the Balloon* trick, this imbecile stuck himself with the needle and had a massive bleeding episode from the blood thinner medication he was taking every morning. Another one nearly strangled herself with the rope from *Houdini's Tie-up and Escape* trick. The Dean enjoyed their ineptitude so thoroughly that he attended the entire workshop; and never lifted a finger to help either of these bumbling idiots. Getting rid of two tenured faculty members was an enticing proposition for him.

Gavin became the Dean's golden boy for helping the Dean bring the tenured faculty members down a notch. As for me, whenever I came to SCU to teach my classes, the Dean convened a gala event open to all students in the School of Public Policy, so that Cashman the Magnificent could perform his hokey magic act. As the reader knows, there is nothing that Cashman the Magnificent loves more than the adulation of a captive audience.

Sabrina and I fell in love with Hawaii from the minute we first arrived there in 1977. Our decision to retire in Hawaii was a no brainer. Not that we didn't search for other suitable places. We considered Chiang Rai in the mountains of northern Thailand for its rugged beauty. We explored Bali and Lombok in Indonesia, and Puerto Galera in the Philippines, all quintessential tropical paradises. We were captivated by the charm and ambience of Vientiane and Luang Prabang in Laos. We even checked out Palau and Kosrae in Micronesia, plus Fiji and Tahiti to satisfy our fantasies of living in a tropical paradise somewhere in the South Pacific.

After exploring all these places, Hawaii was by far our best option. Its islands were stunningly beautiful. It had some of the best beaches in the world with an unparalleled climate. It had excellent internet access, light years better than its competitors. And finally, Hawaii was in the US, so there were no hassles with visas and legal residency requirements, the bane of the expatriate's existence. Sabrina and I settled into our home in Kailua on the island of Oahu to enjoy an idyllic retirement in Hawaii.



Kailua Beach near Cashman's home in Hawaii

Living in Hawaii also meant living in America, with its myriad rules and regulations. I encountered the first one when I had to get a driver's license. This provided me with the dubious pleasure of engaging with the Hawaii State government and its incompetent bureaucracy, a most distasteful aspect of life in the USA.

The People's Republic of Hawaii, as it is affectionately called, is a corrupt, ethnically divided, one party state with over-regulated labor markets, oppressive non-tariff trade barriers, shady financial

institutions, and crony political arrangements. Nevertheless, you still can't beat Hawaii's beaches, waves, weather, and wahine.

Having lived in Asia for the past 40 years, and having obtained drivers licenses in four different countries, I figured I would get my license as I had in these other places. So I asked my friend, Stan Robertson,² who had also settled in Hawaii, whom I could pay off to arrange a driver's license for me.

"Cashman, are you crazy? You can't do that here," Stan replied. "This is America. You must go to the Department of Motor Vehicles and do it yourself."

I was utterly amazed that, in a developed country like the USA, there were no "fixers" to attend to mundane tasks like this; and even more incredulous that I would experience the indignity of dealing with Hawaii's civil servants on my own. But there was one time, in Indonesia, when I had to go to the motor vehicle bureau to get my license, so in a way I was prepared for such an inconvenience.

When I arrived at the City and County of Honolulu Department of Motor Vehicles, it was clear, that rocket scientists, nor anyone else who could tie their shoes and chew gum at the same time, need not apply for a job here. The shuffling demeanor and blank expressions on the employees' faces insinuated that the lights were on but no one was home.

When I reached the counter to commence the application process, I was told that I would have to take a 30-question written test on driving regulations in Hawaii. Luckily, I have a strong heart or else the shock from that statement would have killed me. I hadn't taken an exam of any type in 40 years. I also hadn't driven in the USA in more than 40 years. As such, I knew absolutely nothing about driving and traffic regulations in the Land of the Free and Home of the Brave. There was, however, a silver lining. Miraculously, these idiots had a record of my driver's license when I was a student at the University of Hawaii. If I passed the written test, I would not have to take a road test.

Drawing on my experience from Indonesia, I knew what to do. "No problem," I said. "Where are the answers?"



**Cashman had to wait like everyone else
To take his driver's test in Honolulu**

When I had to take a written exam for an Indonesian driver's license, I was given all the answers in advance. Even with this type of assistance several people taking the exam in Jakarta still couldn't answer the questions correctly. For these unfortunates, the examiner merely pointed to the answer sheet indicating the correct answer. Based upon this experience, I was hoping that Hawaii had a similar system. It was inconceivable that I would actually have to take a written test without first being given the correct answers.

"What do you mean 'Where are the answers'?" the DMV employee screamed impatiently. "There are no answers. Just go into that room, take the test, and stop pestering me."

² Stan Robertson was one of the Back of the Room Gang with Cashman at Columbia University

As I wandered despondently, test paper in hand, into a room that looked like a high school classroom, I realized that he wasn't kidding. I would have to take an exam about driving regulations in the USA, where I hadn't driven in 40 years, with no crib sheet with the correct answers as guidance. And while we are on the subject of "driving," I never drove a car while living in Asia. I had drivers to perform such mundane tasks. Plus, this two-bit DMV employee held all the cards. If this were Asia, I would have gone to his boss and had him flogged for his insolence. But as Stan had warned, "This is America." It suddenly dawned on me that there was no way I could pass this exam.

Sitting next to me in the exam room was an indigent college-aged individual with black horned-rimmed glasses checking all the answers effortlessly. This situation presented a serendipitous opportunity. With the transfer of \$30 under the table, I suddenly had in my possession an answer sheet with all answers correctly circled. The scowl on the DMV bureaucrat's face as he checked my exam paper was only matched by the shit-eating grin on my face as I collected my driver's license. Perhaps some of the skills I acquired in Southeast Asia will help me survive in the USA.

When I retired in Hawaii, I met some old acquaintances. Dr. P – Dr. Martinus Papadopoulos – my professor at the University of Hawaii and my boss in Indonesia and the Philippines, had been happily retired in Hawaii for years. Dr. P lived in Hawaii when he was a professor. It was logical that he would retire there. He was none too happy to see me again.

"Cashman, I thought I was through with you when you left the Philippines. After that debacle you caused when I was in Laos, I was hoping I would never lay eyes on you during the remainder of my present incarnation. Don't tell me you plan to retire in Hawaii?"

"Well, Dr. P, I was hoping for a more exuberant welcome. Yes, I plan to retire here. Sabrina and I actually have a home close to yours. I can visit you every day, just like old times when we worked together in Indonesia and the Philippines. Won't that be great!"

This response elicited an exasperated frown from Dr. P. Soon I could see the veins bulging in his neck, just like they did when he lost patience with me when I was his student and his employee. His response didn't surprise me.

"Cashman, the only part of you I want to see is the back of your head as you are leaving my sight." The old boy had not mellowed in his old age. He was still smarting from that practical joke I played on him in Laos.

In 1995 I left the Philippines to work in Laos. That same year Dr. P retired to a peaceful life in Hawaii. But he retained a keen interest in Laos. As a young physician he had worked in a medical clinic in Kratie, Cambodia that Tom Dooley had founded.³ It was one of a network of hospitals and medical clinics that Dooley's organization, Medical International Cooperation (MEDICO), had established throughout Southeast Asia in the 1950s and 1960s, just as the Indochina War was heating up. Dr. P had traveled extensively to the various MEDICO clinics in Laos during his tenure with Dooley. However, due to the onset

³ Tom Dooley was a physician who had achieved prominence during the evacuation of North Vietnamese refugees from Haiphong in 1955. He went on to establish medical clinics in Laos and Cambodia to provide medical care for underserved tribal people living in remote locations.

of hostilities in the 1950s, war in the 1960s, and the communist takeovers in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in the 1970s, he had not been able to return to this part of Southeast Asia.

“If a consultancy comes up in Laos,” he told me as I departed the Philippines, “let me know. I want to visit Laos in an official capacity so I can travel to the remote sites where the MEDICO clinics were formerly located.”

Well, that opportunity arose in 1999. The US Government had a War Victims Fund Project to provide medical care to victims of unexploded ordinance (UXO), remnants of which continued to litter much of the Lao countryside after the incessant US bombing campaign conducted during the war. This organization wanted a consultant to evaluate the project’s impact and make recommendations for future improvements. I recommended Dr. P for this assignment. When they heard about his experience in Laos in the 1950s and 60s, they invited him to join the consultancy team immediately.

Dr. P was quite pleased with this arrangement. When he arrived in Laos, he moved right into my home. He used my driver and vehicle for his daily travel. He worked from my office and used my administrative assistant to arrange his schedule. I even accompanied him to several meetings as his interpreter. It was just like old times in Indonesia and the Philippines, with one big difference – I was no longer his student, he was no longer my boss, and I was now working for a completely different agency.

As I expected, Dr. P directed his field trips to the provinces and villages where the MEDICO Clinics once existed. He even met people who remembered the clinics and how they collapsed as the war heated up. It was a very nostalgic trip for Dr. P.

One night, as his consultancy was entering its final stretch, Dr. P and I were watching TV in my home. Rather than looking at the TV screen, I noticed that Dr. P was staring directly at me. After a few minutes of this, I asked, “Why are you staring at me like that?”

“When are you going to start writing my final report?” he asked. I almost fell off my chair when I heard this.

“What are you talking about? I’m not writing your final report.”

“Have you forgotten our ‘special arrangement,’ Cashman? I deal with the assholes, the drama, and the bullshit, and you do the writing.”⁴

“Wait a minute. That was our deal when we worked together in Jakarta and Manila. This is Laos, I work for the Asian Development Bank, and you’re working for the War Victims Fund. Once we left the Philippines, the ‘special arrangement’ ceased.”

“As I recall,” he said with a smirk on his face, “we never established an end date for our deal. In that case it is still in force. Plus, in case you hadn’t noticed, I haven’t written anything in 20 years. You don’t expect me to start now? I leave in four days, so you better start writing.”

I could see where this was going. Although I protested vigorously, it was to no avail. I finally capitulated. Dr. P took out his yellow legal pad, sketched out what he wanted in the report, and gave it to me. “I need this in 2 days,” he concluded. Just like old times.

⁴ See Chapter 5 Volume 2 of the Cashman Chronicles for a description of the “special arrangement” between Dr. P and Cashman.

The old fox put one over on me this time. But I had a trick or two up my sleeve to retaliate. I wrote a nice, cohesive report exactly as Dr. P had outlined. However, when I got to the final section on **Recommendations**, I decided to ad lib a bit.

One of the problems Dr. P found was that there was insufficient anesthesia in some surgical units when UXO victims needed emergency surgery. I ditched his recommendation and inserted, "There are plenty of poppy fields on the roads leading to the provincial hospital. It makes sense for the project to harvest some of these poppy plants, extract the opium, and let the patients smoke a huge wad of opium before undergoing surgery. If that doesn't knock them out, several shots of Lao-Lau (i.e. Lau white lightning rice wine) should make them comatose and oblivious to pain."

Another problem was incentives for hospital staff to treat UXO victims after normal work hours. I replaced Dr. P's recommendation with this one: "Provide each employee with one free, all expenses paid visit (except for ancillary services) to a discotheque or karaoke bar every month. If this sweetener doesn't satisfy them, secure counterfeit \$100 bills from the North Koreans and distribute these to all staff to demonstrate the project's largesse."

The final problem was staff performance and occasional behavioral problems. My alternate recommendation for this one was simple: "If staff performance lags, hit them over the head with a two by four piece of wood. If wood is not available, a piece of bamboo four inches in diameter should suffice. That will get their attention." In fact, this admonition was frequently and amusingly used in the Lao language. When Lao staff were berated for underperformance or misbehavior, their superiors would say, in jest, "get me a two by four..."

As promised, I sent Dr. P a draft copy of the report two days later with my improvised recommendations. I would have paid good money to see his face when he read my editions. I would have to be satisfied with his reaction when he returned to my home later that night.

"How did you like the report?" I asked expectantly.

"I didn't read it. You've been writing reports for me long enough that I know what to expect. I submitted it as my final report today so I can get out of here tomorrow."

I had not anticipated this outcome. The people at the War Victims Fund were not going to like the recommendations I wrote. But that was nothing compared to Dr. P's reaction when I told him what I had done.

My shenanigans had pissed off Dr. P many times in the past. He was annoyed with me the entire time I was his student. He nearly had a stroke when I procrastinated sending my application for the job in Indonesia.⁵ He practically imploded when he offered me a deal to save my ass when I was on the cusp of getting fired in Indonesia for my mischief, and I thanked him by asking for a raise.⁶ But this was different. When the shit came down this time, Dr. P would have to dodge the turds himself.

"You wanted to play a practical joke on me? So, you insert your clever little gems to get a rise out of me? I wish I had one of those two by fours to hit you over the head right now. In our deal there are no

⁵ See Chapter 1 Volume 2 of the Cashman Chronicles when Cashman dithered about submitting his application for the US Embassy job in Jakarta.

⁶ See Chapter 5 Volume 2 of the Cashman Chronicles for Dr. P's response to Cashman's insolence.

practical jokes. I do my part and you do yours. You are a contemptuous cur, Cashman.” I had heard that one before. “I don’t know why I wasted my time with you for all these years.”

I should have kept my big mouth shut and merely looked contrite, but the connection between my brain and my mouth misfired again, so I added, “You could at least have read the draft report I prepared.”

“Why, so you could get your jollies when I read your stupid, inane editions? Are you blaming me for this fiasco? I should have thrown you out of my office that first time we met in Honolulu 20 years ago.”⁷

The shit hit the fan when Dr. P arrived at the War Victims Fund Office the next day. He couldn’t blame me because he couldn’t admit that someone else had written his report. Instead, he had to listen in silence while senior War Victims Fund staff berated him for being unprofessional. When he got home that night, I asked him how it went.

“Not well,” he said. “I don’t think they’ll ever ask me back.”

“Did you have any parting words to share with The War Victims’ Fund?”

“Yeah, I told them to kiss my ass.” That’s exactly what he taught me. “As for you Cashman, our deal is formally terminated as of this moment. You’re nothing but trouble.”

I guess I shouldn’t be surprised that Dr. P wanted nothing to do with me when I retired in Hawaii.

Last but not least, I reconnected with Seamus Campbell when I retired in Hawaii. Seamus had returned to Honolulu in 2001 after his assignment in Laos ended. True to form, he found a job with the City of Honolulu where he could drink coffee, read the newspaper, eat donuts, and do as little work as conceivably possible. Somehow, he managed to receive the City of Honolulu Employee of the Year Award twice. You figure that one out! Seamus had already retired by the time I arrived in Hawaii. Both of us found ourselves retired, living in paradise, with plenty of time on our hands and plenty of money in our pockets; a recipe for disaster for two rascals like Seamus and Cashman.

We fell into a self-indulgent routine very quickly. We began playing golf regularly and noticed that, although we were just hackers, we were considerably more talented than the middle-aged losers at Honolulu’s golf courses. This presented an opportunity to sandbag some suckers by betting on golf. We got so good at it that we were banned from playing at certain golf courses.

Watching sports on TV became another of our obsessions. Seamus loved to watch baseball, while I liked watching basketball, and we both loved to watch football. Between March Madness and the NBA Playoffs, the baseball playoffs and the World Series, and the NFL football playoffs and the Super Bowl, the two of us watched sporting events at his



**Seamus Campbell (l) and Larry Cashman (r)
playing golf in Hawaii**

⁷ See Chapter 10 Volume 1 of the Cashman Chronicles for Cashman’s first meeting with Dr. P.

place or mine regularly. We were so desperate to watch any kind of sporting event that we even attended University of Hawaii baseball and basketball games, although neither team had gotten close to a winning season in years.

When Seamus and I spent time together, we invariably drank single malt Scotch whiskey and smoked good cigars, just like we did in Laos. Drinking, watching sports, and smoking to excess did not go over well with Sabrina and Etsuko, Seamus' wife. We simply disregarded their wrath and continued our depravity unabated.

One night Sabrina and I were at Seamus' house for a barbecue. As usual Seamus and I were drinking and smoking to excess and getting loaded. As was their custom, Sabrina and Etsuko headed for the upstairs lanai when the cigars came out and the language could make a sailor blush. The departure of our wives was fine by us. It enabled us to engage in even more drinking, smoking, and bullshitting.

Suddenly Etsuko yelled from upstairs, "Seamus, start the barbecue. I'm hungry."

The wind was blustery that night with a threat of rain, so Seamus decided to start the barbecue in his garage. He loaded the charcoals in the grill, doused them with lighter fluid, tossed in a match, and they burst into flames. We returned to our drinking and smoking while the coals seasoned.

"Are the charcoals ready yet?" Etsuko screamed after 10 minutes. "Can't you speed things up? I'm hungry."

Seamus began fanning the charcoal to speed up the fire. Then I interceded. "Seamus, let's really get this fire going. Otherwise, we'll never hear the end of it."

While Seamus fanned the charcoals, I grabbed the can of lighter fluid and sprayed a healthy dose on them. When the lighter fluid hit those hot coals, a humungous column of flames burst from the coals. It startled me so badly that I sprayed even more lighter fluid onto the fire. Being three sheets to the wind didn't improve my reaction time. The flames exploded with a huge bang and spread upward so fast and so high that, in a matter of seconds, they reached the straw figurines and masks from Etsuko's Papua New Guinea collection hanging above the grill and set them ablaze.

In seconds, the masks and figurines were engulfed in flames. Seamus and I panicked; our sense of despair and impending doom accentuated by the copious amount of whiskey we had been drinking for the past several hours.

"Seamus, we need a fire extinguisher pronto. Do you have one?" Fortunately, he had one in his garage. I grabbed the fire extinguisher from Seamus and began dousing the fire.

At that very moment Etsuko and Sabrina ran into the garage while shouting at the top of their lungs at us. I was so startled by their sudden appearance that, when I turned toward them, I neglected to stop pressing the fire extinguisher, and blasted Sabrina and Etsuko with its contents. In a matter of seconds both of them were covered in a thick layer of foam.

I knew, from my previous faux pas, that Sabrina could curse. She had hurled expletives at me many times. But I was surprised by some of the things Etsuko called me. And she cursed me out in English and Japanese. Fortunately for us Sabrina was not as loaded as Seamus and me. She grabbed the fire extinguisher from my hands and doused the flames. Her action saved the garage, but Etsuko's Papua New Guinea collection was reduced to ashes.

Well, Seamus and I caught hell for this little stunt. According to Sabrina and Etsuko, we drank too much, we smoked too much, we bullshitted too much, we were immature, irresponsible, unreliable, careless, negligent, reckless, stupid, idiotic, brainless, and incorrigible fools. Not that we didn't deserve it, mind you. We were lucky we didn't burn down the entire house.

As a result of our little blunder, Seamus and I were placed on the wagon – with orders not to drink, smoke, play golf, or hang out together for the next six months. At the end of our sentence, Seamus and I resumed our old routine, with one caveat. NO MORE BARBECUES!

As the reader may have noticed, the same personality traits and character flaws that plagued me during my formative years growing up in New York City have accompanied me throughout my adult life and into retirement. What is that saying about a leopard not being able to change its spots? Although I'm older now and hopefully a bit wiser, Larry Cashman is still the same unprincipled (but lovable), lazy, venal, and selfish schemer and coward he always was, with no ambition, no aspirations, few skills, and no moral compass whom you initially met in the first chapter of the Cashman Chronicles.

What I do have is an inexhaustible line of bullshit and uncanny good luck. And unbeknownst to me, despite my limited intelligence, I somehow managed to learn how to speak foreign languages quickly and fluently. These meager talents, plus the good fortune to meet my long-suffering wife Sabrina, propelled me to New Mexico, Hawaii, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Laos; landed me in positions of some distinction for which I was hardly qualified; and deposited me into a comfortable retirement in Hawaii. As I have said many times, if Larry Cashman must choose between being good at something or being lucky, he will opt for the latter every time.