

A JOURNAL FOR THE JOURNEY

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I have had the good fortune over the years to address thousands of audiences in some 28 countries throughout the world. Everywhere I go, people ask me about the name “Aun.”

I am of Lebanese descent, but while growing up in the little town of Lexington, South Carolina, most folks there did not know what a Lebanese person was. In Lexington, you were one of three things: a white, a black or a Jew. My maternal grandfather, Elias S. Mack, Sr., was affectionately called “*Jew Mack*.” He was of Lebanese descent and was Lutheran by faith. How you get a Jew out of that I’ll never know.

Ole “*Jew Mack*” was an interesting man. Mack was not his last name. Skaff was actually his last name, but when he came through Ellis Island, N.Y. like so many other immigrants, they said, “Hey Mack, you need to change that last name.” Being a pragmatic man, he said “okay, I’ll take Mack as my last name.”

“*Jew Mack*” was elected Mayor of Lexington back in the forties and served faithfully and honorably. However, when it was determined that he was an illegal alien, his friend Strom Thurmond, who was Governor of South Carolina at the time and a close Mack confidant, helped him become an American citizen.

Mack’s son, my uncle, Eli Mack, Jr., affectionately known as Junior Mack, was also elected Mayor of Lexington exactly forty years to the day after his father by the same identical vote margin of his father. Didn’t anybody move in or out of Lexington in 40 years.

My grandfather affectionately called me his “*hyetti*,” an Arabic word which, roughly translated, means “the breath of my life or my heart,” a beautiful expression. I called him my Jiddo (pronounced Jiddy). It means grandfather.

During his latter years, my grandfather became very ill. I would often baby sit him, which amounted to running back and forth to the kitchen

to get him food and drink and helping him with any other needs he had. I would sit in front of the television set and turn it off when a commercial came on. He hated commercials. We'd time it and turn it back on 60 seconds later. Problem was, it took those old TV sets three minutes just to warm up. We finally decided to compromise and just turn the set down until the commercial disappeared.

During those commercial breaks, Jiddo would often share his inner most thoughts with me. I was only 11 at the time and I knew very little, but somehow, these little sessions seemed like they should be important to me.

One day, I arrived and my grandfather gave me a book that he told me would be quite valuable to me. I opened it up and it was empty. It was a journal. I told him "Jiddo, it's empty. It has no value." His reply, "What you put in it will make it valuable my hyetti." That was the first of over 205 journals I now have in my possession, which will one day be a legacy to the great, great grandchildren I'll never know or meet.

What kind of legacy are you leaving behind? Are you leaving a mess or a message?

One of the first things Jiddo had me do was make a list of 500 things I wanted to do in my life. Now get this, I'm 11 years old. I don't know 500 things. He would sit me down with the daily newspaper and we would go through the articles. He say, "how about this or how about that?"

We made up the initial list. I had the occasion recently to pull out that journal. I now scanning my notes onto a CD so that they will be preserved forever for future generations.

What's interesting was this: of the 500 things we put on the original list, I have accomplished or scratched off as "not being accomplishable" some 487 of the things. What does "not being accomplishable" mean? Well, I'm never going to be a Priest (I found out about the Celebrate deal and decided against that one).

I'm never going to play professional football or be Governor of South Carolina or any other state. However, I wouldn't have played high school football if it weren't for putting football on the list.

I wouldn't have run for the House of Representatives back in 1980 if I hadn't put Governor on the list. I think the reason I do professional speaking today is because I put "priesthood" on the list back in the summer of 1960. I wouldn't have done play-by-play announcing in St. Cloud, Florida if I did not first have the dream back in 1960.

In the bible there is an interesting line that goes like this: "If the eye be single the body is full of light. If the eye be evil, the body is full of darkness." To me, what that means is this: if you know where you are going, it's a whole lot easier to get there. Your goal is clear and your motive is pure.

What I learned from Jiddo is to write things down. I take notes everywhere I go today. I even do a very Protestant thing, I take notes in church, which drives my Priest crazy. They look at me like I'm trying to steal something from them.

Learn to write things down. It'll make a better person out of you. Keep a journal for the journey.

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