In case you are bored and can’t find something to read.

**The Reagan Picture.**

When I got the call from the White House I hung up. I was sure it was one of my friends pulling a not so funny prank. Thank God they called back. The lady said don’t hang up here’s my number call me back. When she started with 202 I said are you really from the White House she said yes. I started to apologize and she said “don’t worry this happens all the time”

When you go to the White House you get certain perks. They said I could see anyone I wanted. I chose Jessie Helms and Strom Thurmond North and South Carolina Senators. Remember this is 1987. I was there because of the amount of Lifesaver Tags we were giving away 125 million a year. For those of you who have just figured out we distributed more tags than kids remember every child required at least a ½ dozen shoes, jacket, rainwear, swimsuit and ski wear. You will be able to go to Lifesaver Charities web site shortly and learn how we saved 900 young lives in 5 years and how you can get Lifesaver tags for your grandchildren compliments of Lifesaver. The we I was referring to was our staff, some great people in government and thousands of police officers, schools and PTA’s.

Back to the story. I wanted to put Lifesaver Tags in USA footwear and clothing to compete with what I thought was a threat to our textile industry from overseas. Both man laughed at me and said we will never have to worry about that junk coming from overseas. The textile industry today is a dead as both of them are.

What was funny is my younger brother was in the clothing industry working out of the Empire State Building in New York. He was about to go out on his own knocking off west coast fads and selling them all over the country. At least twice a year he would call me and I would pick him up at LAX and we would go shopping. He bought anything he thought was new and selling on the west coast. After he had a cars worth of clothing I took him back to the airport and him and his clothing took off for numerous overseas manufacturers. Long story short he now has homes in San Clemente and the New Jersey shore which is where we are from. A 37 foot boat docked at Dana Point harbor, 5 cars one better than the other and a bunch of money. It seems that Wal-Mart thought he had a great idea and he did tens of millions of dollars with Wal-Mart every year for more than a decade. I just hate it he is my little brother. LOL

Back to the White House- My mom & Dad, my wife and children got to come to the White House and were shown around DC while I was running around Washington. HHS, and the Dept. on aging were terrific. The armed forces used the tags to give to the children of service men and woman because they were always relocating. The Dept. of aging gave the tags to Alzheimer patients all over the country and it seems that HHS controls nursery schools and they opened the flood gates there. They followed the plan we implemented in California. **Funny story** Jim Stockdale Secretary of Health and Welfare in California came home from work. His wife said I want you to read this Readers Digest article. He said, after dinner. He said later and later until he went to bed. He got up in the morning and went to the kitchen for breakfast. His wife was there and said “you eat right after you read this article” The Readers Digest article was on his plate. Thank you Mrs. Stockdale without you none of this happens. Jim read the article and called me. He told me who he was and he wanted to see me. I was broke and was trying to figure out how I was going to get to Sacramento. He said I will see you tomorrow at your office. His showed up at noon. He said he liked what we were doing and he wanted to give us funding for Lifesaver Tag distribution. I said thank you but no thank you. I didn’t want to play politics with protecting children. He almost had a stroke. He told me about his wife and the Readers Digest Article. We talked for about an hour and he said no one has ever turned him down for free money and he wasn’t going home until we figured out a way he could help. I told him he controlled all the nursery schools in California and California could buy and distribute tags to all of them.12 million tags purchased, distributed and being worn by the little ones. I mention the Dept. of aging and I needed someone I could call to help me navigate what was about to happen. He gave me his personal number and his assistant Jackie and said call us anytime. I walked him to his car. The last thing he said to me that day was “I am looking forward to seeing how this works out.” A year later he and Jackie and numerous others nominated me for the Presidents Volunteer action award.

In the above paragraphs I told you I was broke let me tell you what happened before the Readers Digest was printed.

The Readers Digest was the most important publication to cover Lifesaver Charities. (Circulation 20 million) I had a friend who sold advertising for Readers Digest. Jane arranged a trip to Proctor & Gamble the largest consumer products company in the world. We pitched them having one page in the Readers Digest being a page of Lifesaver Tags that would carry P & G’s products name. That 20 million times about a dozen tags per page round numbers that close to ¼ billion tags. The pitch was going great I knew how to insert it because I had inserted the coloring book into a 24 pack of 7 up a couple years before and it won numerous awards for 7 up. The P & G buyer was aware of it and who I was which shocked the hell out of me. I was a little leaguer playing in the big leagues. It started with one buyer then two, then a series of different depts.at P & G. In case you couldn’t guess that was great. We talked about everything including who made the material for the tags, Kimberly Clark. Suddenly the meeting ended abruptly and we were back on a plane to New York. It took me hours before I could form a sentence. I asked Jane what the hell happened. She said I have no idea we were not doing well we were about to sign a deal for millions. Jane called me a few days later to tell me what happened. It seems that Kimberly Clark the maker of the Lifesaver Tags also makes **Huggies** baby diapers and P & G makes **Pampers.** I was like Coke and Pepsi you didn’t do business with both. I was crushed. Jane called a few days later probably to make sure I didn’t jump off a building. She said she was sorry and would do anything to help. She shouldn’t have said that because I asked her to get me an appointment with the Publisher of Readers Digest. I thought if I can’t sell something maybe they would feel guilty enough to write something. Even a few lines to 20 million people would help. A week later I had an appointment. I was so scared I brought my dad. I am a sneakers and t-shirt guy but my dad looked like he just walked out of GQ magazine. We drove to Westchester county to a town called Pleasantville. It was a mansion with a ¼ mile driveway I was impressed and intimidated at the same time. I went to a smaller school the place was enormous and this was where the writers were. We went in and they escorted us to the atrium for lunch and three people from Readers Digest sat with us and talked over drinks. I think they were there to see if the publisher would be wasting his time with us. A little more than an hour passed when he showed up. I am so glad my dad was there or I would have wet myself. My dad carried the conversation and I talked Lifesaver Tags and answered questions. The publisher sat down and after a minute or two he looked at me and said you got 10 minutes give me your best shot. My first question is did he have any children He said yes I have three boys. I smiled and said let me tell you a story and I will bet you that you stay a lot longer than 10 minutes. I told him about the nine year old boy who was hit by a car on the way to baseball practice and complicated by no identification or medical information the boy died alone in a hospital while his mother searched in a panic to find her missing son. I told him they thought they had it under control until the boy had a brain bleed and died. His mom had to make the decision to turn off the machines that were keeping her son alive. He was pronounced 20 hours after being hit by the car. I told him at the funeral I offered my condolences to the mom who looked at me and said “I didn’t get to say goodbye” There wasn’t a dry eye in the house including my own. He had a dog like me and I explained how my dog had more information on him then the kids had on them. We talked for hours and we had lunch. He asked questions about all kinds of scenarios with children who go to the Emergency room without parents. I asked about his travels which were extensive and what happens to his kids in those situations. No hospital lets kids die but they don’t have any medical information and the child is hurt taken away by strangers and for the first time in their lives mom and dad are not there. It is a receipt for disaster and hospitals are reluctant to do anything without the consent of the parents. He got up shook my dad’s and my hand and said he would be in touch.” He took one step turned around remembering P & Gand said “don’t worry we are going to help”

I didn’t hear anything for a month until one day Jeff Blyskal called and said I am from Readers Digest I will be there tomorrow. He spent a day with me and a day checking out my story and talking to everyone who was involved in this tragedy. He came back the next day to say goodbye and ask a few more follow up questions and he was gone.

A couple of months passed and I didn’t hear a thing. Then the morning before Jim Stockdale came to my office we got a call from a Grandma in Seattle. She said she had read the Readers Digest article and couldn’t wait for her to write in and us to send her Lifesaver Tags she had a dozen grandchildren. At this point I had no idea that Readers Digest mailed the west coast first and then the middle of the country and then the east coast meaning 20 million people just got the Readers Digest article. Everyone in my office got on an extension I told her I would send the tags today if she would read me what they wrote. Remember it could be a couple of lines where to get free Lifesaver Tags. She answered me with “The whole thing” I said please if you would how big is the article. She said four pages and son you are on the cover. She read the article and everyone was crying. I thanked her and sent her tags. Jim Stockdale called the next day and I met him the day after that so I didn’t get to the post office to see if anyone responded.

When I say broke I mean getting change out of a big water jug that held my change so the kids had lunch money. Everyone knew I had to go to the post office and see what we got in the mail. If we didn’t get something we could turn into business we were done.

Our mail box at the Buena Park post office was a little box with a tiny window so you could see in if you had any mail. I looked in and it was empty I got this punched in the gut feeling actually lower but that would be inappropriate. I opened the box and there was a little form that said to come to the counter. My first thought is the mail box fee was due and I didn’t have the ten bucks. I got to the counter and asked the lady if she had any mail for us. She said please stand over there and I will have someone get it. I heard these metal wheels going over the tile squares on the post office floor da-dump-da-dump. Here was a guy with this canvas wheeled container 4 foot long 3 foot wide and 3 feet high with post office boxes full of mail. I can’t tell you what I thought because I can’t remember much from there. I filled my trunk with the boxes and I took the few boxes that didn’t fit into my back seat when I heard da-dump da-dump. There was the guy from the post office, big smile on his face saying “you don’t want to forget these.” Here was another container just as full as the last one. I filled my back seat, front seat and I could barely see the road. Be careful what you ask for. Before it finally stopped a month or so later we had 350,000 letters. Some people just asking for tags, some telling us their story many having lost a child. Some of the letters had checks and money. About $400,000.00.net. I wasn’t broke anymore and all the companies who could care less about Lifesaver Tags before were calling us. It was lightning in a bottle and I just held on until I got to the White House. My printer Al who is one of my dearest friends today was making Lifesaver Tags 24 hours a day seven days a week.

Let me go back to the White House I am getting tired and it is way past my bedtime. There was a lot of things about going to the White House but one of those special moments was my dad who thought I was crazy and always told me to get a job at the post office because they have great benefits. The night before the presentation there was a dinner. You had to stand up and the MC told everyone what you had done to get here. When I sat back down my dad who had a great sense of humor leaned over and said “I guess the post office is out.” It’s really special when your dad thinks you’re cool.

The next day we went to the ceremony at the White House luncheon President Reagan and 80 of his closest friends. My wife’s plus one was Colin Powell. I was standing next to the stage there was a railing and three steps to climb and maybe 10 feet to get to President Reagan. The speaker came on and explained what we did at Lifesaver Charities and I turned into GUMBY. I couldn’t get up the steps nothing was working. I was about to pass out. Then I saw this hand that came to shake mine it was President Reagan who walked over to me and when he shook my hand you could hear the collision of hands all over the room in addition he squeezed my hand and got my attention. We walked onto the stage where they took our picture. Look at the picture his left hand is missing because he had my belt. He looks like he is saying something important when he was saying “don’t you faint on me” I walked off the stage and I was fine, Gumby was gone. I was seated at a table next to the President but before they even started to serve lunch he asked the Chairman of the Kellogg’s foundation to switch chairs with me so I could sit next to him. He was going to keep an eye on me. He was a very funny guy and he made everyone very comfortable at the table like they didn’t all know I almost lost it. About ten minutes in after quietly asking me a few times if I was alright he said “George if you could have any position in government what would it be. I am sure the answer was supposed to be President and I am sure he had a funny response but I said “Secretary of simple sir” It felt like an eternity and I thought I just put my foot in my mouth but what was really just seconds when he started to laugh followed by everyone at the table. That’s what I remember about Ronald Reagan.