

Chapter 19 - Home and Beyond

The days Sandy was here were really fun. The girls let her decide what she wanted to do and when she wanted to do it. She definitely spread herself around a lot, but I think when she took off to go back south, she was looking forward to some rest.

For me it was almost like the old days, but there were times when it wasn't all that pleasant. She and I talked about a lot of things, but we could only do that when the others weren't around. It wasn't difficult, we just went for walks in the forest but it just gave me more of a guilt complex for not sharing things with at least Mel and Hailey - at this point. Jessi later. There was no choice and realistically I shouldn't feel guilty about it.

Sandy packed her little car and, having said her "see-ya later", off she went. The four of us just looked at each other sadly. We'd miss her, but we had things to do and we'd be seeing her again in a couple weeks.

She called the house about 7 hours later letting us know that she'd arrived back home safely. Mel answered and they talked for a few minutes before hanging up. Mel turned around with a big grin and said, "Sandy says she misses us already. She told me to give her a call when we made the next show and she'd try to take a couple of her 'days off' during our visit."

We'd had a blast at the second show and according to Mel's tally we did over \$750K for the 9 days! I had to make one special order to my supplier who came through and scheduled it to be delivered first thing the next morning. Fed Ex was there at 7am sharp. It couldn't have worked out better.

Hailey and I had to hump butt to print up a few hundred extras that we had almost run out of. Thankfully Mel's sheets told us what we were short on

so that I could order appropriately. I didn't like over ordering for the overnights because the shipping charge was exorbitant, and my supplier didn't have to scramble to come up with something he may have been short. This time it was all standard types of product he carried by the ton so it was just pack and ship.

By 10:30am that 7th day inventory was back in the black. We'd printed about 200 extra because the trending lines showed me they were the hottest sellers and I really didn't want to have to print more here at the show. I still had a few hundred blanks, so it wouldn't have been impossible, just a pain in the ass to do more prints so close to the end.

Thankfully none of it needed to be dyed. Doing the tie-dye was at least a 3-day process and required a lot of water. That part of doing a faire was just a show. I did some twice a day to show how it was done. Mel came up with an idea that we'd have to kick around for next year's shows, because there was no way we could ramp up for this year. She didn't agree, but deferred to my judgment.

She wanted to hold tie-dye "classes for the masses" about three times a day where we supplied everything someone would need in a "kit". They would do the set, the tie and the dye at the show and take it home for the rinse with some special soap. If they were going to be at the show the next day they could leave the project with us and come back next day to rinse during one of the days classes. My objection surrounded the requirement for water and setting up more deep sinks for rinsing.

That may be next year, after some detailed planning sessions. It wasn't only the logistic of numerous deep sinks and the water supply for rinsing, but we had to create the kits. Mel was already working that angle and had two vendors that were willing to kit the dyes, set and other items. All we would have to do is supply the blank shirt, workspace and rinse facilities. I had to chuckle because Mel just wasn't taking "no" for an answer, but in doing all of her checking, sourcing and planning she understood why I said no for this year.

The reason I didn't slow her down or try to stop her is that I knew she would come to the conclusion she did, but she needed to collect the data herself and see the logistical nightmare she was creating. She learned a valuable lesson in the exercise and those educational processes were going to be invaluable at some point in her life.

When we left LA that trip we were almost cleaned out, but it felt good. Everyone took the ride north this trip, even Jess. She had some projects to finish up when we got home.

Mel had the re-order requirements all ready and printed. She'd forward them to the distributors as soon as we hit the house so it gave them a few days to come up with our needs. It was the largest order I'd ever placed. As usual, we'd pay cash and this time didn't have to dip into the bank for any funds.

So after show number two we had grossed \$1.25M for the two shows and I was shocked because the profit, after all the expenses were figured was a very sizable number.

You have to keep in mind the audience in LA. Those people will pay outrageous money in the name of ego and supposed recognition. I charged \$90 for a simple T-Shirt and couldn't keep them in the trailer. Those tiny skivvies with silk-screened "things" on them, they bring \$45-\$60 a pair in LA.

Who am I to deprive someone of their stupidity? I laugh all the way to the bank. Goofy shit but in LA that's the way it is.

Mel was shocked when she ran the numbers, but gave me a big grin when she showed me the deposit slip for show number two after purchasing all the replacement stock, inks, plastics etc., including Jessi's project.

I paid the girls their 9 days wages plus a day because we had worked the Thursday prior to the show all day. I also gave them a bigger percentage as bonus for this show as well giving each a 100% share this time. When I gave them the checks their mouths dropped

open. They started jumping up and down squealing to each other, "Do you believe this?"

I just sat back and smiled. They had earned every penny. All three had worked extremely hard all week, and the sales numbers showed that. If anything needed to be done, someone would jump on it immediately without having to be asked, and rarely needed instructions. They took care of business and it meant I was free to do some additional designs that we'd worked on between shows but hadn't had the opportunity to finish or print. Most sold really well, so they were added to the "standard" fare for the next show. Hailey had a lot of screens to make and supply to our vendors.

Between shows this time we did some work in the trailer making room for Jessi's new bins, which actually took up less space than the usual boxes. Each bin held at least two boxes and in the small and medium sizes took way more than two and a half boxes. We still had boxes to replenish the bins, but when we got to the next venue, we only had to set up the bins and keep them stocked.

Jess had found a vendor for the bins from the hotel one evening while we were relaxing. They not only had the bins but a "system" that we would use for setting them up to display. When she had made her design decisions and found the system, she "called a meeting" to solicit any inputs from the rest of us. Hailey and I just nodded our heads as she explained the whole thing but Mel had a couple questions, and one suggestion.

Jess slapped her forehead and said, "Why didn't I think of that," to Mel's suggestion.

Mel just smiled and shrugged her shoulders. Teamwork wins again.

The bottom line was that she was given the okay to order what we would need and had it delivered to the house so it would be waiting for us when we got there. She had already tried a few of the units in a test, which worked very well.

We were fairly sidetracked the first day or two after we got back from show #2. We knew Sandy would be here sometime in the afternoon so we needed to get work done. We got done what we needed and when Sandy arrived it all came to a screeching halt anyway.

We had a great first night with Sandy as you already know, but when we got up that morning we had to start working on the preparation for the next show. Sandy sat back and watched while the four of us did what we needed to do.

We had a lot of work to do getting prepared for the next venue, but we also had plenty of time. We relaxed for about an hour after breakfast and headed down to the barn to start striping out the trailer.

Since too many cooks spoil the broth, Hailey and I concentrated on stripping things from the trailer and setting them aside for re-installation. Jess unpacked and checked out the new bin system to see what needed to be done to get it set up in the trailer so we could deploy it with the least amount of extra labor. Sandy let us know that she was available with an extra set of hands any time we needed it.

While the three of us were busy doing the trailer, Mel was working on coordinating the re-stock ordering and setting up the jobs with the printing vendors. Somehow all the chosen vendors had packaging machines and would package the product with an insert in thin plastic for a minimal additional cost. The plan was to have over 500,000 units packed into the trailer. A far cry from "Bobby doing a few thousand between shows" - I couldn't believe we were going to carry more than half a million units. Mel is amazing.

The good part was that by schedule we'd have 14 or 15 days before the next departure to get the trailer packed because all the vendors would have the stock to us in plenty time due to Mel's coordination.

The printers already had all the screens they'd need, so Mel ordered the inks and the product stock to be drop shipped to the printer rather than having us play middleman. She even ordered the rolls of plastic that they'd need to do our wrapping.

While she was in ordering mode, she calculated the number of new screens we'd need over the next few shows. She contacted the printing vendors to find out what sizes, mesh and types would work best for them in their machines.

Using all that collected data, she ordered screens and the special emulsion we used and had it delivered to the shop here at the condo. We use a special emulsion on our farmed screens so that the printer can get close to 50,000 prints from a screen before it needs to be recovered and redone. Hailey was an expert at screen recovery, emulsion application then printing the screens. The girl is an incredibly quick study.

Our vendors knew to let Mel know when the screens were wearing so that we could make and ship replacements. Screens don't last forever and as I said, Hailey was in charge of re-supplying the vendors with replacements or any new designs. She applied the emulsions in such a way that getting the maximum results from our printers was the rule and not the exception.

A couple of the printers lamented to me one day that they wished all of their clients were so diligent in supplying what was needed. I just told them I was too picky to leave it to chance, and not one of the vendors ever took that as an affront.

When there was a new design that Hailey was shipping screens for, she'd let Mel know so that it could be added to the Database and then added to an order. This way Mel could ensure there was enough stock at the vendors shop to support the new design, and if not, she could order the appropriate blanks and get them shipped to the printer. Teamwork wins again.

Drop shipping the blanks saved three to four days of processing and the printers were staged and ready when the jobs hit their back door. They appreciated the coordination, and we appreciated the fast turnaround. They also appreciated immediate payment, which was also part of Mel's overall system.

I never wanted any of my vendors waiting for my money; it wasn't fair to their business. There was no "net 30" in our system. It was 25% deposit and the balance when we received the product. If the vendor was set up for electronic fund transfer type payments, Mel had it done within a few hours of receipt - day or night. Data doesn't hold normal office hours.

Mel kept the printers advised on ship schedules and tracked the entire product to their back door. They knew when it would arrive, how much there would be and in how many packages.

With all of that we still made the next shows easily on time, totally restocked and ready to do the specials that were left over when we got there. It was being run more like a business and it was still a kick in the ass for me.

I was still doing things pretty much as usual, but the business side was now organized and ready for action. We were all having a blast, the girls were getting an education and we enjoyed each other's company immensely.

I know I haven't mentioned it much, but Sandy was part and parcel to our antics at the rest of the LA shows. She was unable to arrange to do the Las Vegas show with us - this year. Just because she doesn't get much mention here lately, doesn't mean she's not an integral part of our menagerie's shenanigans.

I was going to be pretty bummed out when Jessi left us to return to school. I'd already talked to Liz about accelerating her last classes so that she could start going to college early next year.

We'd already worked through Mel's finals so even working the shows, she was able to challenge and pass a years worth of high school in about six weeks. I was so proud of her when she finished the last test that we all took a day away from the third LA show to celebrate. Our booth was closed on the Wednesday with the approval of the promoters and we all had a "Mel's day".

I told Jess that we'd have the same kind of celebration when she had finished her last tests and was ready to start her classes at the local college. I also told her that I was confident that her grades would come up with the test scores. I didn't know, she was already making great progress, but had sworn Mel and Hail to secrecy.

She smiled at me nervously and said, "I'll do the best I can Bobby."

"I know honey. In case you didn't already know it, all the rest of us are behind you 100%, so if you need any help don't hesitate to ask."

She nodded her head, "I know and I really appreciate it."

So a couple days later I finally noticed that Jessi had her nose in some books when we got back to the room and it continued through the rest of the shows as well as most of the time in between. What I didn't know was that she was already more than half way through her challenges. She had only the last semester of her senior year left to do.

I also didn't know that Liz had set it up so that she was taking her tests online, and they were graded immediately so she knew the outcome right away so she'd just move on to the next one.

Seems there was a lot of shit going on that I wasn't aware of. "Need to know", so I guess it's my fault because I'd impressed that on all three of the young women.

Getting close to the end of the Las Vegas show, Jess hadn't had her face out of the books or the laptop during any of our free time for a couple months now, mid show three to be precise.

Mel mentioned something about it briefly, but we knew not to disturb her and just did our thing, sometimes leaving Jess in the room while we went out to do something.

She did take a few evenings to keep her place on the schedule and it helped her to relax. I only assumed she was working on a few classes, but had no idea what she was really up to. I just knew she seemed really uptight and stressed at times but wouldn't come to me for help.

Yeah, it bothered me, but I had also told her that she could come to me. The few times I made comment, she just smiled and said she was okay, so I had to let it pass. I wasn't going to force myself on whatever it was she was doing. I just made sure she understood that I was always available for help.

By the end of the Las Vegas show Jessi was four months along and definitely starting to show her condition, she just glowed. A pregnant woman is one of life's most beautiful things I've ever seen. There seems to be such a sense of contentment, it's uncanny.

I thought the changing hormones were part of her emotional turmoil.

How wrong I was!

So it was that the last Friday of the 16-day Las Vegas run, which was also the last show of the summer show season, Jess came into the room late in the evening just beaming. We all looked up at her with questioning looks. Hailey's sparkling eyes betrayed something, but I didn't know what it was.

From behind her back Jessi pulled out a large FedEx cardboard envelope and handed it to me.

I looked up at her questioning, "Jess this has your name and address on it, why are you giving it to me?"

With a gleam in her eyes she said softly, "Open it Bobby."

I pulled the cardboard zipper and pulled out the papers that were inside and when I saw what it was, I looked up at Jess with a huge smile and said, "Congratulations Jessica. Good job, Sweetie. You don't

know how proud this makes me. I am so proud of your accomplishment. Wow!"

It was her High School Diploma. Not a GED, Liz had made sure that if she completed the required classes, that her school would award the Diploma. She was also given the option of participating in the ceremony that following June.

She had done almost the same thing Mel had done, in about the same amount of time. She had successfully challenged her entire senior year of high school. The second sheet was her registration for classes at her local community college where she was signed up for 16 units.

I looked up at her, she was bubbling over with pride, and as Mel, and Hailey looked at the papers they jumped up to hug Jess and give her their congratulations as well.

Hailey spent a little more time with Jess, and their kiss was long and meaningful.

When their kiss was finished they held hands and smiled at Mel and me. Without a word, they walked to one bedroom area and closed the door behind them. It wasn't latched shut, but it was obvious they wanted some private time together.

I looked at Mel who had a big smile and asked, "Did you know about this?"

Mel looked at me with her smile and nodded, "Hail helped Jess through a bunch of her classes and they got very close."

I nodded with a grin, "Apparently."

"Bobby, that piece of paper means more to Jess than anything right now. She did this whole thing for you. For herself as well, but it was for you that she busted her ass to get it done before we finished the season."

I gave Mel a shocked look, "You knew this was going on?"

Mel nodded, "Yup. Hail and I promised to keep it to ourselves. If you'd have found out it would have been ok, but she wanted more than anything else to surprise you so that you'd be proud of her."

"Oh Mel, I can't tell you how proud of her I am. Well, I don't need to tell you; I'm just as proud of you."

"I know Bobby, but make sure you let her know... often!"

"I'm proud of all of you Mel. You did the same thing earlier in the summer."

"Bobby, I didn't have to work as hard as Jessi did. This stuff is easy for me; it's not for Jess. Hell, even challenging the courses wasn't all that challenging for me. Jessi worked her ass off!"

"This means an awful lot to her, and whether you have sensed it or not you have done wonders for her self-image. You have allowed her to excel and grow where she hadn't previously had any incentive. She had no reason or purpose in school."

After a short pause Mel continued, "She's never been the best student though she's always been super smart. Shit, in some things she's a lot smarter than Hail and me!"

"She just didn't know what she was going to do. You heard her with Liz, Sweetie. She knew they couldn't afford college, and her grades weren't going to allow her to get scholarships. She was looking at flipping burgers or waiting tables. Though those are very necessary things, in her mind she was looking at no real future."

I continued to listen to what Mel was explaining. I had no idea about this aspect of Jessi's life or ambitions.

"You changed all of that for her and she wanted in the worst way to show you how much she appreciated the opportunity. She needs to hear how proud you are."

Often Bobby. Even though we all know it's all for and about her, she feels that this is all about you!

"Bobby, you know as well as I do it's all about her. You provided the opportunity, but there was nothing that forced her to take it. Maybe the fact that Hail and me were doing it provided some incentive. Maybe it was the baby, but she 'had to wanna' because if there wasn't any wanna there was goin' to be no 'gunna'."

I nodded and just kept looking into Mel's eyes, hearing and understanding her heartfelt observations about one of her "sisters". I knew to keep my mouth closed and my ears open.

"Jessi worked her ass off to pass those tests and stressed a lot over a few of them, to a point Hailey told her to move on to another class because she was worried that all the stress would have an effect on the baby.

"Hail and I worked with her on the classes that she was having the problems with but Jess took the tests alone.

"Did you notice the GPA on the college paperwork?"

I reached over and picked it up to see what Mel was talking about, and I was shocked. I just looked up at Mel and mouthed, "Wow!"

"Yeah dude, wow!" Mel said. "She actually aced all but three of the tests and only missed two questions on two of them and only one on the other. They were the three classes that she was stressing so badly. Hail helped her, but Jess is the one that did it. I'm not sure I'd have been able to help her the way Hailey did. She is so patient... So patient."

I nodded in acknowledgment, "Mel, her GPA would get her into some pretty good universities. I mean 3.95 is nothing to sneeze at."

"Yeah, it's the same as mine, but I don't have to work at school Bobby, I just do it. I've never had to work at it until this summer when I was challenging

entire classes and like I said, that wasn't all that much of a challenge. I was so fucking bored I couldn't pay attention in classes, but I still got good grades."

"I can relate Mel. With ADD I couldn't pay attention for more than a few minutes at a time. I used to get yelled at by the teachers because I was like 5 chapters ahead of the class.

"Hello? Ya think I might be bored? What are ya going to do about it? Nothing!

"I wish I'd have had the opportunity to do what you, Jess and Hailey have done but challenging classes wasn't allowed in those days. They could move you ahead, but you still had to take the damned classes. BORING!"

Mel smiled nodding her head, and just then we heard a very loud moan from the other side of the door.

We traded knowing smiles, stood up together and hand in hand, walked to the other bedroom area in our suite. It was going to be an early morning, but I hadn't had the opportunity to love on Mel for a while. We've all been too damned tired to play.

Tonight was going to be for Mel.

When we got to the bed Mel turned to me and whispered, "Do me soft Bobby. I want it slow and gentle tonight. Love me."

I smiled at her and nodded.

"Anything you want Kitten," while we both slowly peeled our clothes. I followed her into the bed and as she turned on her back I kissed her softly and tenderly.

She wrapped her arms around my neck, and moaned quietly into my mouth, relaxed her entire body and waited while I showed her how much I truly loved her.

So she got it soft and slow that night and we seemed to go on for hours. Her moans were music to my ears.

As much as Hailey and Jessi had come into my life, Mel was my base, my rock.

Yes, Hailey was "inherently" attached far more tightly than Mel, but those things that I said to Mel that first day still live at the forefront of my being. I'm infinitely happy that I'll never have to choose because that would kill me.

I think Mel got all of that and more this night. We both put our souls into our love for each other and we were both drained completely when we finally dropped off to sleep.

Much later, when Hailey and Jessica joined us quietly, they found us still in a very tight embrace indicative of our love. Jessi slid up to me wrapping her arms gently, and Hailey moved up to spoon tenderly with Mel.

Mel just let out a soft, "Mmmmmmm... I love you Hailey."

Jessica wrapped me up and snuggled to me like a second skin.

"I love you so much Jessi. I can't tell you how proud of you I am."

I could sense the smile on her face and the relief in her sigh. "I wanted to do it for you Bobby. I've never had the opportunity before, and I wanted to show you how much I appreciated it."

"I know, Baby. I am so happy you took up the challenge. I knew you had it in you and you proved to all of us that you did. I love you so much!"

Jess giggled quietly and put one leg around me wiggling herself so that my penis was massaging her wet labia. "Speaking of having something in me, you have anything left for me?"

We maneuvered ourselves a little until I felt the head of my stiffy move her labia aside on the way in. She moaned softly as I made my entrance and we made

slow tender love until we both fell asleep. I can't tell you how many orgasms she had because I wasn't counting, but I was in heaven.

That's how we all woke up the next morning.

That damned phone rang way too early, but that's the way it is during a show.

I told Jess that we'd have a celebration day on Monday, but that we'd start Sunday night and to think about what she wanted to do.

I let the others in on it as well and figured we'd head back home some time on Tuesday. Mel also clued Hailey in on what she had talked to me about so that when I concentrated on Jessi for a few days, Hail would understand what was going on.

Mel told me later that Hailey was going to have the same kind of talk with me so when she heard that Mel had already done it she knew she didn't have to. She did let me know about the thoughts however, and as usual we were all on the same page.

Hailey looked at me and said, "What Mel said." With a big grin, she just left it there for the moment and kissed me tenderly.

I haven't mentioned the girls and Fred in a while either. They continued to support Fred's raffles and for the season, Fred was able to donate about \$1.5M to his charities. He let the girls know that 50% of the funds went to the charities in their names.

He and Miriam were getting along famously, and I figured we'd be finding a wedding invitation in our mailbox one of these days, but between Mel and Hailey they knew that the two of them had decided to "live in sin"; neither wanted the hassles of marriage. They were committed to each other at this point and didn't need a piece of paper to demonstrate it.

They both set up their respective estates so that either would have spouse's benefits in the event

either passed away while they were still together. Fred had asked me how I'd set up things for the girls, so I turned him on to my investment and tax folks and he ran with the ball from there.

The charities Fred donated to were thrilled at the contributions and awarded both he and the girls a plaque to demonstrate their appreciation.

I continued to make custom raffle shirts for Fred at no charge. That was my small contribution to the cause. I finally let the girls in on the tax liability they had gotten themselves into, but also let them know that the fact Fred put \$750K in their names as donations, would put them in a good tax position for this year. They needed to consider that for next year's shows.

They let me know that they were going to continue to work with Fred and his raffles in order to make sure his donations continued. Even though Fred put the donations in their name, it was for Fred's late wife that the donations were made.

My girls were happy, Fred was happy and I was happy for everyone. It couldn't get better than that!

When the show ended we all attended the end of show/end of season party at the invitation of the promoters, so after we'd packed everything up, we all headed off to the party and you know Vegas parties!

I spent my time with Jessica.

That evening was all Jessi, and I continually let her know how proud I was of her accomplishment and that I recognized how difficult some of it had been for her. She was beaming all evening. It went well with that glow she already had about her. I held her hand and put my arm around her with great pride. Her condition was quite apparent to all assembled, but I had nothing but pride for my mama to be, and I was proud to be the daddy to be.

She just beamed when I'd give her the praise for her efforts. I've always been a total believer in positive reinforcement and I was laying it on Jessi in spades.

Monday was all for Jessica. We did Las Vegas all over, and then took in a show that night, not getting back to the room until about 2am.

For us it was late in the morning when we got up on Tuesday to check out and head on down the road.

There was no show to get ready for so there was no big rush. Jessi didn't start school until January because she didn't get signed up for the fall quarter and would start in the winter quarter, knowing that there was going to be an interruption sometime in late February or early March.

She'd said she was used to studying online now so that the classes she was taking the first quarter were all tele-courses that she didn't need to go to the campus for. They were both on the computer and on the television. Liz made sure that the cable they were subscribed to included all the college course channels.

It was good planning on her part. We were going to do two shows in December just before Christmas, so Jess would be available for both of them, and it may be that she'll be the only one to make both. Hailey thought she had finals starting the week during the first show so she'd make the second, and Mel thought she'd have finals the week during the second show and would only make the first.

The December shows were only 4 days each, starting Thursday and ending Sunday. They were also up here on home turf being in downtown San Francisco. None of the girls had ever been to the City, so it would be fun to show them around a bit.

Fisherman's wharf, and Chinatown are high on the list. The first show was going to be at Moscone Center mid-town, but the final show was at Pier 39, which should be the premier of the two. I had prime booths for both.

Life was good, and it just kept getting better.

So as you can see, our mutual lifestyle didn't have any detrimental effect on the girls. They all told me it is my somewhat permissive attitude towards them, always treating them as adults and making them think for themselves that made them want to please me and impress me academically, spurring their own competition with each other.

It's the only competition they have ever engaged in, and both Mel and Hailey understand that there is not now, nor will there ever be any need for real competitions in our relationship.

It's always a healthy competition and never causes issues. I'm sure it helps that one is into the "thought sciences", one is into business and the "hard sciences", and the one we all missed was into engineering so there's no competition anywhere.

I have also noticed that Hailey will work with Mel on philosophical issues, and if Hail needs help with any kind of business or science issues, Mel is right there helping. We all wish Jessi was here with us, but understand and accept her decision. I feel she'll come around sooner or later, but for now we need to support her in every way we can, both physically and emotionally.

She came to visit on weekends when she didn't have to spend it studying, but after Eloise was born her visits were fewer because she was totally busy.

We understood and would help her with any issues she needed assistance with, we just did it remotely. We also made special trips down to visit her, and I made extra trips to be with my Jessi and my precious daughter.

I also made extra trips down to bring her up to the house when she could afford the time. I'd given sweet Jessi the opportunity for education and she took the bull by the balls and obsessed over it. She was pre-

engineering at this point, taking a minimum of 16 units a quarter and maintained a 4.0+ GPA.

Jessi's biggest problem was trying to decide which avenue of engineering to pursue. She was waffling over electrical or mechanical. I offhandedly suggested she do both.

She smiled and said, "I've thought about that Bobby, and may do that, but I can't do both at the same time. I need to concentrate on one or the other, but I have given serious consideration to both. There are a bunch courses that cross, but it's one or the other at the start. When it's time for Masters, I may be able to combine both."

I just threw out that a double "E" would probably be the better place to start, if only because of the hi-tech industry.

She agreed and said that she was leaning in that direction anyway, but was still on the fence.

Interestingly, when the girls do help each other, they do it in the same way I worked with them. Don't give direct answers unless it's necessary. They'll provoke questions and point in the appropriate direction so that the other can find the answer. And neither resents having to find the answer for herself because it's always been that way.

In my own life, I've always found that answers tend to stick if I have to find them for myself. There are many times I need help with the path, but I enjoy the investigation and research. All the girls are of the same opinion and ethic.

I can't tell you how proud I am of all my women. They continually surprise me with their thoughtfulness and maturity that is well beyond their young years. Oh yeah, they're all well over twenty now, and Hailey is a roaring twenty-two, Eloise is three, going on ten and I couldn't be happier.

I must have done something right to deserve this, but I'm damned if I can figure out what it was.

I'm certainly not complaining!

Me? I'm still doing shirts and skivvies', working five to ten shows a year, pretty much for fun. Usually it's just the international biggies, and now because of our excellent reputation we always get prime booths and make tons of money.

My investments and special contracts have paid me handsomely so I really only do shows for something to do. None of the girls has to work if she doesn't want to. There's plenty of money to go around and keep us all happily in our toys.

They still join me in doing the shows with Eloise, Megan and Trish tagging along in our vagabond lifestyle, three more hippies in training.

It's a little further into the future, but not to leave you hanging too far out, Megan is Hailey's first daughter, and Trisha, affectionately known, as "Tree" is Melinda's first daughter.

We've moved; we had to with our growing brood, but that's another story altogether. There are many ramifications to that decision, but it should all work out in the end.

Mel has totally automated the business processes, and we've been able to market the software and systems for a pretty good piece of change. I make sure that Mel's name and reputation are always associated with those products. I neither need nor want the notoriety.

She gets more contract offers than she can handle, so she's started a consulting company to pick up the slack. It's more or less on "auto pilot" because Mel is an expert at picking good people, so she has many other irons in the fire.

She's also working on another Masters program, with sights on a PhD program.

Hailey is already working on her second PhD, Psychology now that she's a Dr. in Philosophy. I keep wondering if she plans on doing any MD type studies so

that she can move into Psychiatry, but she has plenty on her plate at present.

She still does all the screens we ship out to our vendors. During the off-season she just piles them up because she knows Mel will come to her for replacements at some point.

As it turns out, Melinda couldn't have been more right in the very beginning. Hailey and I are perfectly matched to the core of our souls and there is incredibly intense love between us.

I make damned sure that Mel never feels left out, or feels like a "Second Fiddle", because the love I have for her is just as intense as any given to Hailey.

It's just different.

It's a tough situation to be in, but hey, I think I can manage.

The End