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On the Highway of Life

*A guide book for life, aimed at teenagers
... and adults*



*I dedicate this book
to my children
with love, pride and confidence.
May the book help and guide you.
I wrote it for you.*

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Introduction

The learner needs to know the fact.

The assistant needs to know where to look it up.

The professor needs to know someone who knows where to look it up.

(old saying)

School is a precondition for your education. School is a foundation on which you can build your own life.

You are right: one subject or another will be irrelevant in your later life. Still, it is part of the overall picture, and worth learning in outline in that context.

Education is fundamental. It is there to give you your sense of direction in life. Without it, life is a trudge. And education does not end on the day you leave school; it continues until the day you die. I would claim you start the education you need for life ... only after you have left school.

You often pick up along the way the knowledge and attitudes you will need for a happy and fulfilled life. Along the way, not at school. But school is the first step you need, and the starting point for what is to follow.

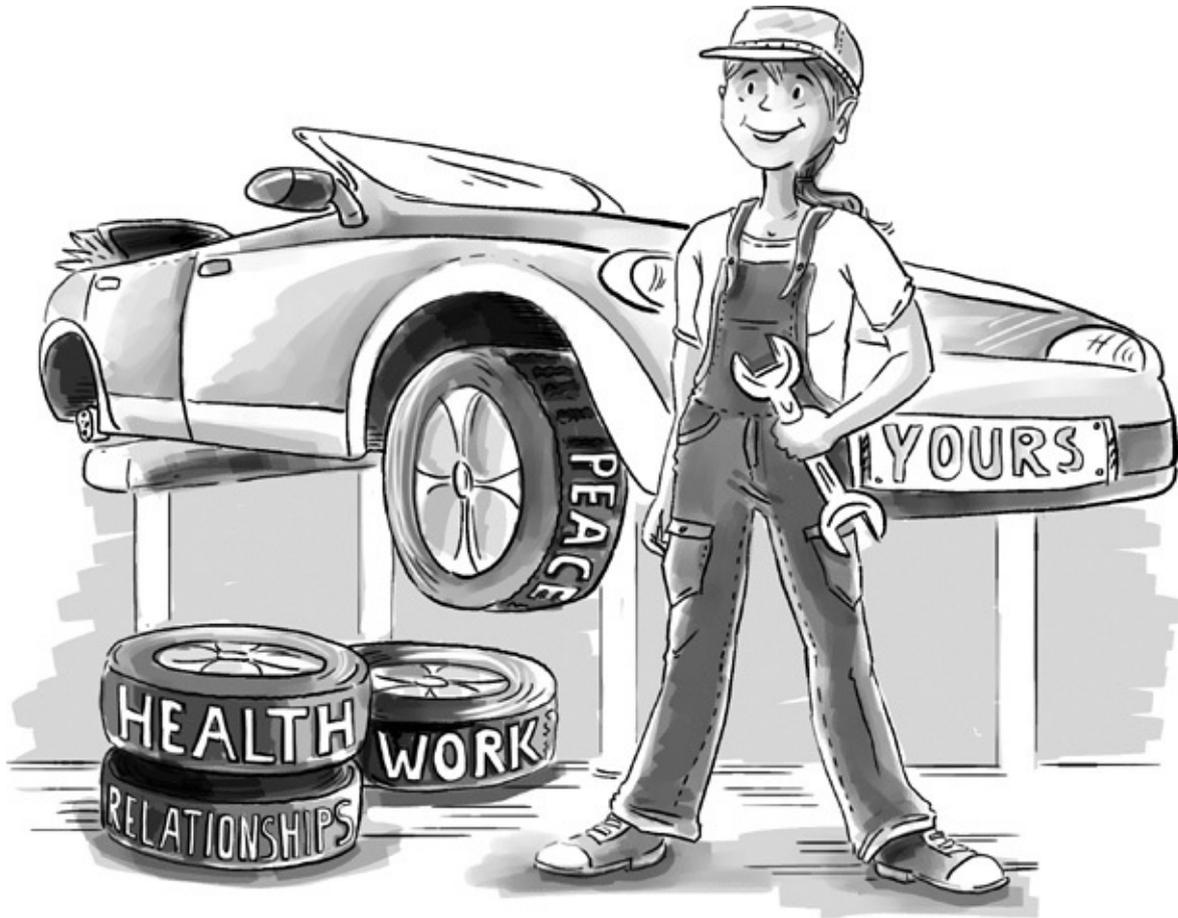
In this book, we will soar like eagles. An eagle is the king of the air. The eagle looks down on its vast territories from a great height, and it runs little risk of getting lost in the morass of distracting details. From that survey of the whole territory, the eagle identifies what is of interest – and then pursues just that, with success.

I will try to help you with a survey of life: your life. I would like to see you soar like an eagle, and for you to plan your route along life's highway, seen from now to the end. I would like to sharpen your vision for the things that matter in life, so you can read the off-ramps and the on-ramps, the service stations and the construction sites for what they are. I want you to lead a successful life.

In this book we will look at school days and the life that comes after them. Whether you follow up on school with an apprenticeship, with further studies or indeed with no plan, to begin with, you will be in a change process. You can't escape that change. It is part of life, and to be welcomed. At this moment, while you are still at school, you can lay stable foundations for the life to follow, and this book may help you as you do so.

Look forward to life! It is worth living.

This book is my invitation to you, to set out on a journey. A journey through life. Let us drive together along the highway of life, in your life car. I will show you the wheels on the car, each one representing a specific component of your life. And I will make suggestions on maintenance, so that your life car performs well and for a long time.



But before you hop into the car of your life, you need a few run-outs of driver training. No driver training, no driver's license. This book represents the theoretical part of the driver training, and the overview. As for the practical part, you have to do that yourself. Nobody can take that over from or for you.

I have a clear vision and a goal. I want to equip teenagers and young adults with the tools and techniques they will need to lead a happy and successful life. I want you to believe in yourself, to start out and continue with no hang-ups, self-aware and confident, joyful and affectionate, to construct your own life and find your own role as an adult ... independently of your social or family background and the material environment in which you have grown up.

When I write about jobs, in many instances I shall have to choose a gendered terminology. That simplifies matters for me as a writer. It has nothing to do

with my being male or not liking females. So, please, girls and women, you should feel that I am addressing you just as much as I am 'him' over there. Thank you.

This book does not have biblical aspirations. I wag no forefinger; and nor do I intend to instruct anyone. But I do hope to reflect publicly on my own experiences of the last forty years as I navigate the highway of my life. I aim to show you what seems to have worked for me, and experiences that I imagine have relevance also for your life.

Of course even I cannot hope to apply the knowledge contained in this book, all the time. I make mistakes, like everybody, and I have to live with the consequences. Clearly, there are things I would not do the same way if I had the chance to repeat them; but I feel as though my decisions were the right ones for the time and place I found myself in.

Life is a process, one of continual learning and improvement. For, as the old German saying has it:

If you don't move with the times you'll be moved, by time.

I am thrilled that you bought this book.

Are you ready for life's highway? I am looking forward to our ride together.

Hop aboard and let's go!

My stories

All the tales that I will tell over the course of this book are based on things that really happened. Whatever I claim to have experienced, heard, read, felt and suffered: those are the situations and effects. I hope they will entertain you, make you smile; and I hope also that they will trigger reflection. Maybe they will encourage you, give you some hope, and clarify that there is some sense in whatever happens in life.

In many instances I became aware only years later that the experiences I recount had become a kind of turning point in my life. Funny, but my growth was triggered by just these difficult, challenging, unfamiliar and even unpleasant events. They taught me to approach issues in a different way, or to look at them from an alternative perspective.

Writing the stories has helped me throw off the spiritual weight and clutter they encumbered me with.

At the time a crisis is in full swing it feels like a threat. Often, in the rear-view mirror, one sees it differently.

And I am happy I was able to experience them the way I did. Happy now, in retrospect.