

MOSAIC – LIFE TILES

Mosaic  
Life Tiles  
Moving and Provocative

Autobiographic Anthology: 1

By

“Frank Julius” Csenki

© Copyright January 2016  
All rights reserved, reproduction in any  
format is prohibited

ISBN: 978-0-9950178-5-6

This is a collection of short stories of true events, told as close to reality as memory serves. In some cases the names and characters represented have been changed. Any resemblances to persons living or dead are entirely coincidental unless otherwise stated.

## The Occurrences of Tiles

Okay, so this is the starting point. As you know, the title of this book is “Mosaic – Life Tiles”. These tiles to be clear; are individual experiences and elements that touch upon the sides of other “tiles” that then come together in the composition of each story. This is a book of short stories. You will find that one story will have a tendency to link to another story, by association with tiles past and tiles future depending on the placement within the mosaic composition that makes up my fragmented life.

It is with luck, guidance and advice (from family and close friends) and careful thinking on my part (“sometimes he said, with a grin”) that allowed this fragmentation to remain glued together, securing things in place and holding my life together.

No doubt as time marches on, the glue will dry and no longer hold fast all the tiles. I imagine that will become self evident as my health deteriorates, my bones become brittle, my muscles will start to strain and ache, and the wonder of old age creeps up upon me.

## MOSAIC – LIFE TILES

I have no doubt that I will awaken one morning and look into the mirror as I do every day, then say “holy crap!” whatever happened to me; and I will be seventy eight years old all of a sudden, overnight! Is that how it happens? I have often tried figuring out the passage of time, and how it marches on, but always seems to stay in the present. Yesterday is dead and gone, and tomorrow never comes; as the song says. I believe that was a Kris Christopherson tune, you know the one I’m referring to, and so yes, that would then logically only ever leave the present to deal with. The present to me has always been the past, now and the future all rolled up into one, and thus I will be looking into that mirror on that morning when I am seventy eight, and ask; “how the hell did I get here?”

Hopefully the crumbling of my “life tiles” will be a slow process, but for now, the tiles hold tight and the mosaic is clearly seen. But as my memory will fade, so will the tiles become more obscure and opaque, the cracks between them widen and the tiles will chip away from the passage of time. But like I say, for now they hold tight and perhaps I can do them all justice in bringing

them to life in these words, and allow them forever to hold tight in print. Here I offer you a close-up to each one in detailed drilled down insight and fashion.

Now having said that, it does not mean that I'm about to start at the beginning of this life of mine, but rather tell you about my life's interesting happenings; my life's "Mosaic – Life Tiles". This would then cover the period from "now" being defined as the time of your choosing to read this and maybe all the way back to the roots of my memories, which I "presently" put forth here. See how that "presently" inserted itself into my past again? Take note however that I qualified it by "*maybe*".

The funny thing about writing is that although there is a fundamental platform governing the setting, the characters and the plot; writing does have a way of taking on its own life, directing the author into areas sometimes hard to avoid, and needing exploration. The trick is to bring things back onto track and stay focused, driving to the conclusion, and a satisfactory conclusion at that.

I'll be talking to you about things that stand out in a man's life, a teenager's life, a

little boy's life. With some luck you will be able to relate with similar experiences of your own, and if not similar; then my aim will be to enrich your emotions with heightened levels of imagination from my mind's eye to yours. I firmly believe that the theatre of the mind is the most vivid, absorbing and spectacular venue of the human experience as evidenced by your own dreams.

For those of you of the opposite sex, who happen to read the words contained within these pages, I trust that you will with some caution and appreciation open your mind to the workings of a male mind and accept both the pros and cons of my delivery. So without further ado, I will tell you about the experiences that created my mosaic life tiles.

These experiences I will convey in the form of short stories, an anthology on the first series of life tiles. I will be sharing with you the unusual, the incredible, the unbelievable and the thought provoking realities that I am hoping will trigger amazing connections to experiences of your own, and with that my life tiles can

momentarily interchange places from within my mosaic makeup to yours.

We've all had incredible life experiences that cannot be matched because they are unique onto themselves and onto you and you alone; but sharing those experiences, adds to the collective human bonding of living our lives, learning from each other, reveling in joy, finding and offering empathy in despair, thus making the connection that unites us for a Momentary interchange of life tiles. Some of those tiles to be found in this first anthology series are:

Me: 1 Company: 0

How I aced a job interview without being offered the position or even wanting to take the job in the first place.

My Mile High Club (sort of)

How the mile high club for me, turned out to be two different things.

Oh Island in the Sun

Just a couple of eye opening events living in Paradise.

Welcome to Russia (NOT!)

Please Lord, just get me through.

Earthworms to Titleist

The golf course of our lives; then and now.

The Perfect Match

Finding the right match in kicking off my career. (Really?)

An Extra Shiny Tile

A life tile requiring special attention and mention.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Me: 1 – Company: 0**

My last day in Moscow had arrived on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1993. I had such mixed feelings about everything. On one hand I was leaving behind one of the most incredible life experiences I had up to this point in my life, having just completed seven months living in the capital of Russia, and let me tell you, from the bottom of my heart, it was with great sadness that I was facing this morning and the day to come, and yet I was excited and relieved to be leaving Russia and returning to Canada.

How does one balance such opposite feelings of the heart and mind? Yes, this is about my job interview to Vienna, but it starts here in Moscow. Just to qualify things up front, I would not be going to my upcoming job interview in Vienna if I hadn't been in Moscow in the first place. It all came about because of my time in Russia.

My last day in Moscow came about after having completed two separate "tours" so to speak in military terms, but mine of course was civilian. My consulting assignment for the Moscow Aerostar Hotel



had come to a close and this day I would be returning to Canada and subsequently to the USA where I resided in Florida. Having spent the last seven months in Russia, the city, its people, its atmosphere, its way of life, its opulence, its gutter poverty, its emergence from communism all had become part of my life and the understanding of daily existence, and all of these things I lived daily through the eyes and love of my Russian girlfriend Irina. I was leaving Russia, I was leaving her, I loved her, and that morning had started with tears in my eyes. This life tile will be revisited another time, but I wanted to set the picture.

After having spent the time I did in Russia and working in that current business environment, was a unique set of circumstances that not a lot of people were exposed to, not in the way I was. It was just after the fall of communism in Russia and free enterprise had been born overnight.

I happen to be one of those individuals who had an understanding of what was going on, and how to understand the new age arising in business, operations, and the compromise required to do business in this new emerging bastion of capitalism. After I

left Russia that day, my seven months of experience and know-how gained, had launched me into a select group of individuals who were sought out by western companies looking to establish partnerships in Russia and the CIS (*commonwealth of independent states being the newly formed countries of Belarus, Georgia, and many more with the breakup of Soviet Russia*) and get the economy flowing.

I left Moscow and flew to Canada. My mother and brother and his family lived in Ontario, my home was in Port St. Lucie Florida, but I flew back to Canada because I was on my way to Alaska in four days time to do another assignment, a short term two month assignment in Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands, to open a new hotel. I did that.

\*\*\*\*

Just after completing that Alaska assignment I found myself talking to an Austrian Hotel company who tracked me down for a job interview for one of their hotels located in Tbilisi Georgia, formerly part of the Soviet Union, now a nation making up the CIS (Commonwealth of

Independent States) as a result of the breakup of the Soviet Union.

So now with the scene and situation set, I finish my assignment in Alaska (another “life tile” to be visited) and flew back to my mother’s place in Hamilton Ontario to visit for a few days before I finally and eventually was to drive back to Florida and go home! All this time long, I had my car parked at my mother’s place in Hamilton Ontario because I flew to Moscow originally from Toronto, and left my car in Canada after driving up from Florida.

Ok, so the story goes on. I finish my gig in Alaska; find myself visiting my mother in Hamilton and the phone rings. When I answered the phone, much to my surprise, it was the corporate controller for Marco Polo Hotels calling me from their head office in Vienna Austria.

I am not sure how he obtained “my mother’s” phone number, but he did! I am taking a stab in the dark, and thinking he had called the hotel in Moscow where I had worked a few months back and they gave him my Canada contact number. That must be it. So, here’s how it went:

“Hello” I answered the phone. “Yes good day, I am calling from Vienna Austria for Mr. Julius”. The male voice on the other end said. Well, I was pretty surprised, but right away I knew it had to be something to do with a job in Europe, he was calling from Austria after all.

“Yes, this is Frank Julius”.

“Mr. Julius, my name is Reinhold Schmidt, I am the corporate controller for Marco Polo Hotels; our head office is here in Vienna. I will get to the point immediately.” He said in an Austrian accent sounding like Arnold Schwarzenhager.

I felt like saying and almost replied. “Well thanks for the call Arni”, but of course I didn’t but if you would have heard Reinhold, you would be very tempted like I was. I have this crazy sense of humor sometimes that forces me to say something totally inappropriate in the most serious of times, just to kind of take the edge off but I held back.

Anyway, he continued on. “The reason for this call Mr. Julius is to invite you to Vienna, since we at Marco Polo Hotels are interested in talking to you about an opportunity with one of our properties”.

I was right. I had this feeling immediately upon answering the phone. I have to tell you, I have this sixth sense thing going on when it comes to these things, specifically calls just out of the blue, which in most cases were and are job opportunity related and usually concerning job interviews.

So I responded. “Thank you Mr. Schmidt for your call, I am familiar with your company and know of your hotels. I have just completed an assignment only this week, and your call is most interesting to me since I was about to search for new opportunities in the coming weeks.” Schmidt then continued on. “Mr. Julius, we are prepared to fly you over here to Vienna, provide you with accommodation for the time you are here and cover your expenses, how does that sound?” Schmidt asked.

Then it was my turn. “First, thank you for your call and please call me Frank. I would be very happy to move onto the next step but of course we need to discuss the position and to save time, let’s get to the point right away and discuss position, location and salary and the entire package, does that sound fair Mr. Schmidt?”

“Yes Frank, that is fine. The position would be hotel controller. I had become aware of your background and your contribution to the success of the Moscow Aerostar Hotel during your time with them. You may know that we operate a hotel in Moscow and one of our executives there who came to know you, spoke highly of you.” At this point, I had to cut in. “Thank you for the compliment Reinhold.”

I figured he already addressed me by my first name, now it was my turn to return the courtesy. “So, tell me Reinhold, which property is this position for?”

He responded. “It’s for our hotel ski resort just outside of Tbilisi Georgia.” My mind at that point switched into high gear, and I ran the scenario through in a matter of seconds.

Two or three things stood out in my mind right away. The first being that I already knew of this company and had heard that they were a little on the “cheap side” when it came to salary and they skimped wherever they could; holding back on certain benefits to their executives. But at this point I was still okay with it, it was just a phone

call for now, but I kept the thought under my hat.

The second issue was in fact the location, that being Tbilisi Georgia. Truth be told, I had no desire in going to Tbilisi Georgia. I recalled hearing that Eduard Shevardnadze who had been Gorbachev's right hand man and his foreign affairs minister during the decline of the Soviet Union was running for The Presidency of Georgia and stability of the nation was not assured. Georgia had become an independent nation with the recent collapse of the Soviet Union it was having a tough time in establishing stability as a nation transitioning from socialism to free enterprise and capitalism.

There was much turmoil and corruption in the country. I had just finished experiencing growing pains of Russian economy and wasn't looking forward to dealing with corruption gone rampant in Georgia. On top of that, having lived in Russia for as long as I had, I learned that other expatriates who had taken jobs in Georgia were experiencing way too much difficulty in fitting in with Georgian society.

But there was one aspect of this conversation with Reinhold that did peak my interest and that was the mention of “Fischamend”.

Reinhold said that I would be required to stay in the town of Fischamend just a half hour or so outside of Vienna. This part was great! I will never as long as I live, ever understand how fate and circumstance seem to come about from time to time in one’s life that demand a follow up, for me “Fischamend” was the draw that could not be refused. I suppose that is what “fate” is all about, something uncontrollable and meant to be. I will get to that in a bit.

I continued on. “Reinhold, so that we are both on the same page, I would be happy to come over for the interview, but before I commit, I will need to know if your compensation package is in line with my needs. If you could elaborate on that, I will then be in a position to make an immediate decision.”

At this point I knew I was going, come hell or high water, because I wanted to go to Fischamend. I only asked for this to be settled so that Reinhold had a certain



comfort zone. But make no mistake; I didn't care what the compensation package was.

Reinhold had no problem with this being disclosed up front. Naturally he didn't want to take the chance of having me fly over, only to find out later that his offer was much too low and my interview could have been offered to someone else instead more in line with his company's offer.

The thing about these sorts of opportunities was that the position and location had to be a good match for the candidate, and there weren't a whole lot of candidates out there. One would think that this would be a very coveted position and opportunity with a long line of candidates eager to experience such an adventure in career development, but that was not the case. Let me explain some of the difficulties in securing the right person.

First, you have to be available, not in six months or even two, but now. Second, the person needs to be efficient, adaptable, and preferably single. Single is good for several reasons. First, the paper work is less cumbersome, work permits, visa, passport and the list goes on.

Second, with a single person there is significantly less risk in terms of adaptation success. But to find a single person, that would mean also someone without a significant other and that is rather difficult. In order to hire someone who has the smarts, the ability, the experience and the managerial expertise, well, such an individual would normally already be in their mid thirties. It does in fact take a few good years in the business to attain a position of executive level status. One does not rise to the capacity of financial controller right out of college.

There are a number of roads one must have traveled to arrive at such a position, especially in the hotel business which is so diverse. Running a resort hotel operation is similar to managing a small town. The resort could at any one time have over a thousand guests participating in a variety of activities, requiring great management attention and know how.

By the time an individual is qualified to run the finance department of such a facility, that person is usually in their mid thirties, and that usually entails having a growing family. Wife, husband, kids, dogs,

cats, and now you have a recipe for a huge tactical and strategic nightmare.

To move a family into an unknown environment is just much too complicated. So we are back to the “single” person. That person, is very rare, no attachments, willing to travel and is an expert in the area you are looking to fill.

I was one of those individuals. I already had over fifteen years of international experience in the hotel business having worked in Canada, the USA, Bermuda, Bahamas and other Caribbean islands as well as Russia.

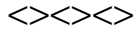
The fact that I was in Russia just soon after the end of the Soviet Union with the birth of free enterprise during the “transition” phase, well that was something very unique. Yes, I happened to be at that time in my life totally single, without a significant other, well sort of.

You see, I did leave a love behind in Russia, her name was Irina with whom I was madly in love, but I had to leave, and I had no choice but to leave her behind.

As events would have it, and as the situation and circumstances allowed, we were in fact able to get back together several times with

MOSAIC – LIFE TILES

her flying to the USA and Canada many times afterwards, but that I will touch upon later.



End of Sample